Commentary

Volume Sixty-three, Number Six, June 1977

O Death, Where Is Thy Sting-a-Ling-a-Ling?

Leslie H. Farber

Churchill and Us

Edward N. Luttwak

SETTLING THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT / Bernard Lewis

HOW IMPORTANT IS SOVIET DISSENT? / Valery Chalidze

THE SANCTIFICATION OF LITERATURE / Harold Fisch

THE HOSTAGE MENTALITY / Dorothy Rabinowitz

WHAT MAKES VIDAL RUN / Joseph Epstein

BREIRA—AN EXCHANGE / Joseph Shattan & Critics

BOOKS IN REVIEW: Edward Grossman/Seth Cropsey/Julius Weinberg/ Chester E. Finn, Jr./ David Singer/Stanley Rothman

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Commentary

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Associate Editor: Brenda Brown

Contributing Editors: Robert Alter, Milton Himmelfarb, Walter Laqueur

Comptroller: Philip Shamis

Production Manager: Bruce Lodi

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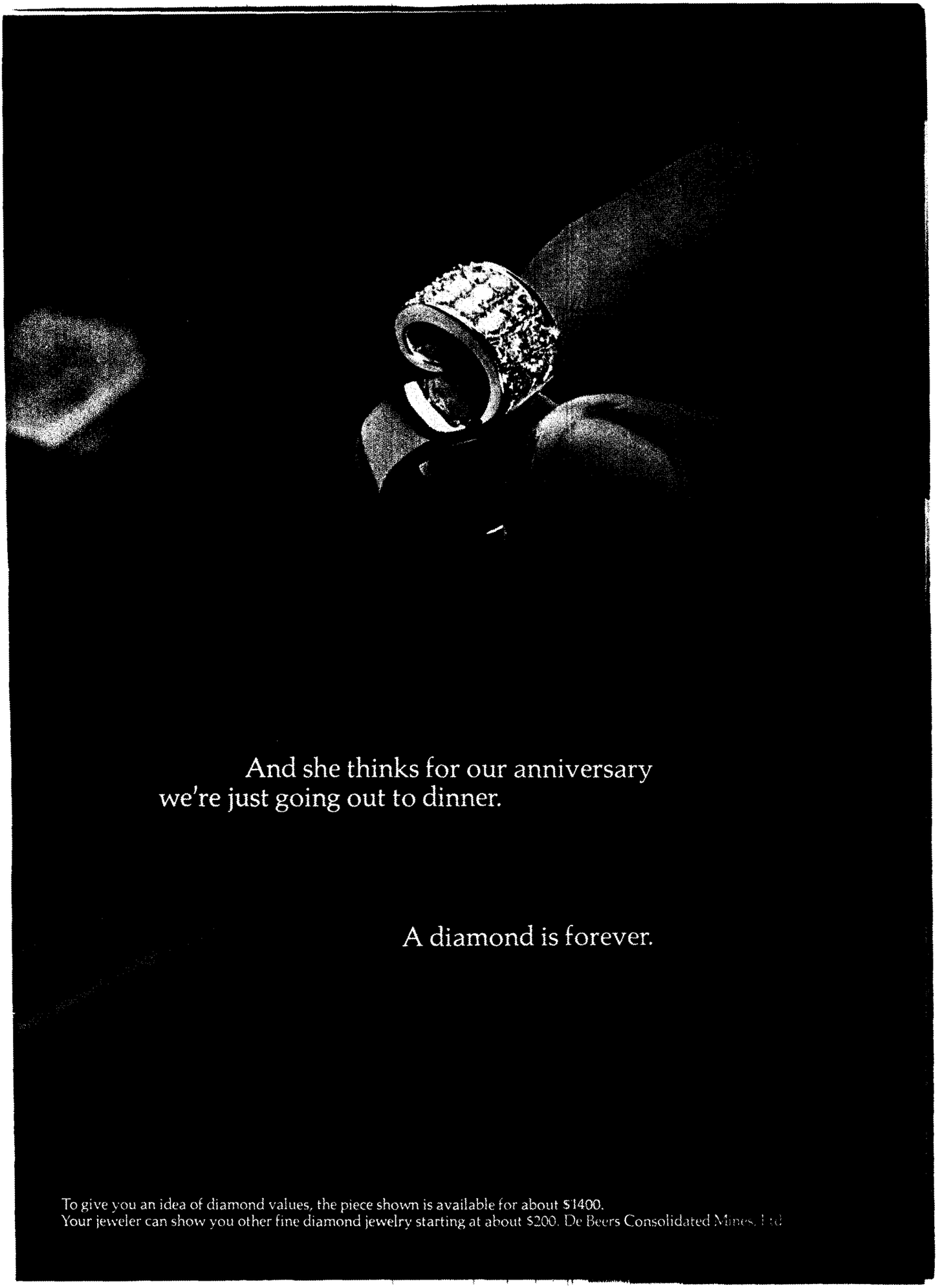
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Letters from Readers

Breira: Pro and Con

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As someone who respects COMMENTARY, I was flabbergasted by the attacks made on me by Joseph Shattan ["Why Breira?," April]. Didn't anyone think of checking out statements about me before threatening my career and my future life?

It is no secret that when I was young I was a leftist and anti-Zionist. But for some time, I have been much closer to many of the positions expressed by COMMENTARY. I'm sure that many of you know what it's like to believe in the totalitarian Left, to be misused and disillusioned, to go through difficult internal struggles, and finally to emerge from this dark period. Many of our finest intellectuals and journalists have had similar experiences.

Mr. Shattan only gets a few minor details wrong, such as:

1. Far from being a "prominent member of Breira," I have never been a member of Breira nor have I ever participated in any of that group's activities. My only connection was to write about four articles for [the Breira newsletter] *interChange* which represented my personal views. They solicited the articles, which are certainly pro-Israel ones. I was told that regular contributors would be listed as associate editors. After the *third* issue, I asked that my name be removed. I never played any editorial role on that newsletter and I wrote with the understanding that I did not necessarily agree with Breira or anything else in *interChange*. Mr. Shattan must have seen issues of the magazine after number three.

2. Since the beginning of 1974, I have actively worked for a number of pro-Israel causes. I have spoken for the American Zionist Youth Foundation, the Jewish Student Network, Hillel, and other groups. I have written in the Jerusalem *Post, Middle East Review, Zionist Comments, Jewish Frontier,* and the *ORT Reporter,* among other publications. I am a member of the governing board and a frequent contributor to the Jewish Student Press Service. I have served as president of my campus Jewish Student Association and I have written a study for the Synagogue Council of America on Israel and the Third World.

3. Over the last year I have written dozens of letters to people spreading or inquiring about the attacks made on me—in some cases months before Rael Jean Isaac's pamphlet, *Breira: Counsel for Judaism,* came out. I have written to every newspaper carrying these false and misleading statements. Mr. Shattan mentions the *Jewish Week,* but not my letter in that paper. At least one publication cited by Mrs. Isaac retracted similar statements made about me six months before her pamphlet came out. Again, a half-year before Mrs. Isaac went to press, I contacted one of her main associates (who apparently supplied the material on me) by telephone and by letter, supplying data on myself and offering to meet with her. She never replied. To my knowledge, neither Mrs. Isaac nor Mr. Shattan ever tried to interview me.

While Mr. Shattan mentions the leftist *Guardian* newspaper, he does *not* mention that, in June 1975, that newspaper wrote that soon after resigning from it (in 1973): "Rubin showed his true colors. In a 'self-critical' article . . . he repudiated his earlier 'support' for the Palestinian struggle and embraced a Zionist position in defense of Israel. . . . He has already begun heaping lies and slander on . . . the Palestinian resistance."

In light of all this, for Mr. Shattan to say that I have never renounced my past and to imply that I am an anti-Zionist is either a deliberate lie or the product of ignorance not befitting a COMMENTARY article.

Given all this, I am both saddened and outraged by the spread of material aimed at ruining me.

BARRY RUBIN

Bethesda, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

What is most unfortunate about Joseph Shattan's "Why Breira?" is its substitution of an attack on Breira for necessary and substantive questioning about the nature and limits of dissent within the Jewish community. Such questioning ought to be explored in COMMENTARY, and if necessary Breira will have to take its lumps on the issues. What Breira doesn't have to take is the gross distortion of its history, activities, and political po-

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Musings of an oil person...

Pretty exciting two weeks. People actually asking for our opinion. Lots of them. And after all those years of trying to get them to listen! Everywhere we go -- parties, the supermarket, on the train -- people want to know what we think about the President's energy program. Usually tell them, right or wrong, it's nice to finally have a proposed energy policy. Something we've been urging a long time. Only wish we knew more details. Like the program's heavy reliance on converting utilities and industrial energy users to coal. How much will it cost? Can industry afford it? Heavy tax for those who don't convert, starting in 1979 for industry and 1983 for utilities. Is that enough time for them to convert? And what kind of coal will they be allowed to burn? Can environmental compromises needed for such a program be reached? And, if not, can the necessary new equipment be installed in time, and will it work? So far, no word on this. No word, either, on where the coal will come from. Underground-mined eastern coal or surface-mined western? Eastern means deeper, lower-volume mines -- will there be enough miners? If it's western coal, can environmental procedures be completed in time?... I know we burn a lot of gasoline in this country. But is an escalating tax on gasoline the best way to cut fuel consumption? Maybe we should be relying on natural market forces, for a change. Will tax be fair to people who have to drive a great deal in order to make a living? How will the penalty tax on big cars affect the fellow with limited dollars and a big family to tote around?... Lots of other new taxes included in the program. Not only on gasoline and automobiles, but also on oil and natural gas for industrial and utility use, on domestic crude oil, and so on. Taxes mean higher prices. Will we be blamed again even though we don't get the money? After all, people worry about higher prices for things like gasoline and heating oil. The President talked about returning proceeds from the new taxes to the people. Am I a cynic? Does it just seem that when a tax is imposed, less money comes out to "the people" than went in to the government?... Listened carefully, but didn't hear the President mention any plans for developing offshore oil and gas reserves in promising new areas. Would have liked to see solid recognition that conservation alone isn't going to solve our energy problems. Seems as though a provision for the rapid development of our domestic oil and gas ought to be part of a national energy policy, particularly if there are problems getting coal out on time.... Did hear him loud and clear, though, when he said the 1979 decontrol of domestic crude oil prices -- called for under existing law -- wouldn't happen. Wonder whether the natural gas price deregulation he promised during the election campaign will ever occur? Where does that leave us? He said companies should be able to plan in a climate of certainty. Well, we're spending a lot of money in the search for oil and gas, and now it seems the rules are being changed in the middle of the game again.... We're probably paranoid after all these years, but the comment about not enough competition in the oil industry seemed uncalled for. So did proposal for new reporting procedures. Is the government going to impose the same accounting requirements on other vertically integrated industries? Or did the President really tell us to be good, and maybe we wouldn't be divested?... Really did like, though, the President's call for "the moral equivalent of war" to resolve America's energy problems. That's our kind of talk! Can remember how everybody pulled together during World War II. There was nothing this country couldn't do back then. Build a ship a week. Turn out more of everything we needed to win than anybody thought was possible. Sure it meant sacrifices. But we shared them equally. And we got the job done. Only hope the sacrifices we need to cope with our energy problems will be shared just as fairly.

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CITIVIEWS

CITIVIEWS is distributed quarterly to Citicorp investors. It contains viewpoints on timely issues affecting the public interest. We believe the following may be of interest to you...

The Spirit of Laws

Scientists and lawyers deal with different kinds of laws. The laws of nature which the scientist tries to discover are inviolable. The law of gravitation, for example, or Newton's three laws of motion, cannot be disobeyed.

Human laws do not share this characteristic. The moral obligation imposed by man-made laws results precisely from the fact that it is possible to break them. That is why everyone censures an outlaw but no one blames the falling apple.

This fundamental distinction is of such ancient origin, its truth so apparent, that one should scarcely need to mention it. Except that there are times in the history of civilizations when the difference seems to be forgotten, and ours is preeminently one of them. A substantial number of Americans now make it their business to examine the interstices of our society for unregulated areas where some spontaneous act of free will might cause trouble. This they diligently try to forestall, apparently in hope of establishing in the realm of human affairs a predictability to rival what we find in the realm of physical nature, where everything happens of necessity, or not at all.

This demand for the perfect, uniform code of conduct is a recurrent phenomenon, and books on the subject have clothed the walls of many spacious libraries. There is, for example, a notable one by Montesquieu, in which he observes:

...the intelligent world is far from being so well governed as the physical....This is because, on the one hand, particular intelligent beings are of a finite nature, and consequently liable to error; and on the other, their nature requires them to be free agents....

Montesquieu called his book *The Spirit of Laws* because he said, *"...I do not pretend to treat of laws, but of their spirit; and...this spirit consists in the various relations which the laws may bear to different objects..."* And that may well be the crux of our problem: Too many of our laws have the wrong objectives.

Everyone from the President of the United States to the hot dog vendor on a New York street corner cries out against the torrent of indecipherable government regulations, yet the real affliction is not what the regulations say, but the spirit that motivates both them and the laws supporting them. Our lawmakers and regulators alike seem to have forgotten that they are not physicists, and that we are not mere physical bodies or quanta of energy swarming about in space, but intelligent beings whose nature requires us to be free agents.

Commendable efforts are now under way to simplify the rules and regulations, if not the laws, by writing them in plainer English, and for this no citizen can fail to be grateful. Can we also hope that when the thickets of ambiguity have

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been cut away, someone will then take a hard look at what remains? For, if the intent of a rule is wrong to begin with, it cannot be made right by simplifying its language.

It is equally true that even if all our laws and regulations could be translated into models of precision and clarity, there would still be too many of them. In the long run, they are defeating their own purpose because they have increasingly narrow applications.

Their generality has been, in the tradition of jurisprudence, the basis for differentiating rules of law from particular decisions or decrees. This naturally leads to the question of whether the words "law" and "regulation" should be used interchangeably. The answer is No—but they are.

It was either Madison or Hamilton, writing as "Publius" in *The Federalist Papers,* who warned:

It will be of little avail to the people that the laws are made by men of their own choice, if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read, or so incoherent that they cannot be understood...or undergo such incessant changes that no man, who knows what the law is to-day, can guess what it will be to-morrow.

That was part of the argument for making our Senate a continuing body, under the Constitution, rather than a periodic assemblage of part-time legislators. Obviously, it did not solve the problem.

What the Founding Fathers did not anticipate, of course, was the phenomenal growth of "regulatory" agencies which, in the course of insuring that our laws were properly executed, would imperceptibly assume the mantle of legislators. It is unfortunate that our founders could not foresee this, because then they might have left us some suggestions concerning what to do about it. Most of them were, after all, disciples of John Locke, who was quite emphatic in his belief that "...the legislative cannot transfer the power of making laws to any other hands, for it being but a delegated power from the people, they who have it cannot pass it over to others...."

The constitutionality of our modern regulatory system is, however, beyond serious question, the expenditure of vast wealth and millions of hours of litigation having long since confirmed it. Our last, best hope may be for a new spirit of self-restraint among the regulators, and more concern by the legislators about what is being done with their laws.

At the moment, there are more signs of the concern than the restraint. Maybe it would help to remind those who persist in the dream of an American society as well regulated and predictable as Isaac Newton's Universe that the first of his laws has a name.

It is called Inertia.

There are plenty of signs of this, too.

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sitions as presented by Mr. Shattan. What the American Jewish community doesn't have to take is COMMENTARY's utter disregard for any decent standard of Jewish scholarship.

Mr. Shattan's account relies almost exclusively on Rael Jean Isaac's pamphlet, *Breira: Counsel for Judaism*. The fact that Mrs. Isaac and her publisher, Americans for a Safe Israel, are open advocates of the ultra-"hawkish" Gush Emunim movement does not seem to have raised any questions in Mr. Shattan's mind, or in the minds of COMMENTARY's editors, about the objectivity of her analysis of a decidedly "dovish" Breira. Given acceptance of the booklet as "free of any overt bias" and "scrupulous in its use of documentation," it was apparently not even necessary to check her research against available primary source material.

Thank goodness some people have checked, including two staff members of the American Jewish Committee who set much of the record straight in an internal background memorandum on Breira, dated April 18, 1977, and prepared for the AJC's Foreign Affairs Steering Committee. One can only hope that the document will be made public. In the meantime, Committee members might request a copy and judge for themselves how well Mrs. Isaac's "documentation" stands up under a dispassionate eye. Suffice it to say that one would have hoped that COMMENTARY itself would have afforded its readers such an opportunity in line with its mandate "to enlighten and clarify public opinion."

As for Mr. Shattan's selective and inaccurate representation of my personal "history," I simply refuse to respond to it. For anyone to have to tout his Jewish credentials and prove his loyalty, especially after having spent most of his student and adult life working for, and involved with, the Jewish community, is demeaning to all concerned. Nor can current pettiness, gossip-mongering, and guilt-by-association attacks which have become standard operating procedure throughout the Jewish community be written off merely as "overreaction" to Breira. Without a *moral* center in Jewish life, discipline can be maintained only by intimidation. Little wonder all too many of my generation find reason to avoid Jewish communal affairs altogether.

Where Mr. Shattan tries to raise serious issues, he falls short of the mark. His argument that Breira works to divide the Jewish community, pressure Israel, and advance the interests of the PLO, is tied to "evidence" such as my testimony before Senator McGovern's Subcommittee on Near Eastern Affairs, in which I allegedly "called upon Israel to negotiate directly with the PLO."

On its face that position is hardly pro-PLO, since it has been advocated publicly by leading Israeli "hawks" such as Moshe Dayan, Arik Sharon, and Yehoshafat Harkabi. On the other hand, it also doesn't happen to be what I said. What I said was that moderates on both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict exist, that their views are not widely shared in the Middle East, but that such views do offer an indication of how the negotiating process might be stimulated if they were to be taken seriously by both sides. The statement Mr. Shattan attributes to me is actually part of such a moderate proposal issued jointly by an Israeli and a Palestinian: Dr. Matti Peled, chairman of the department of Arab Studies of Tel Aviv University and former chief of logistics of the Israeli Defense Forces; and Dr. Elias Tuma, professor of economics at the University of California. What they proposed, and what I read into the record of the Committee, was a "four-step sequence of actions and reactions" which Israel *and the PLO* were called upon to implement before the reconvening of the Geneva conference. The point Mr. Shattan refers to, i.e., the expression of Israeli willingness to negotiate with the PLO, was the *last* point in the sequence and *contingent* upon PLO renunciation of war and a PLO "declaration recognizing the right of the Israeli people to live in their own state peacefully and securely."

This position resembles very closely the proposal known as the Yariv/Shemtov formula, named after its chief advocates: former Israeli Minister of Information, Aharon Yariv; and Israeli Health Minister, Victor Shemtov. The formula proposes Israeli negotiation with the PLO, if the PLO will renounce terror and recognize Israel's right to exist. According to the Jerusalem *Post* (December 28, 1975), Israel's UN ambassador, Chaim Herzog, eagerly confirmed that it was he who first publicly advocated the formula. In describing its import, Herzog refers to an article by Shafiq al Hut, a top PLO official in Beirut: "Al Hut wrote that Yariv's proposal . . . came as a thunderbolt to the PLO and caused deep rifts within their ranks. The removal of the proposal by Prime Minister Rabin, al Hut added, came as a blessing from heaven."

What Herzog saw in this PLO reaction was confirmation of the strategy implicit in the Yariv/Shemtov plan and explicit in my testimony before the Senate Subcommittee: "Those of us who are willing to speak out . . . in recognition of legitimate Arab national rights alongside Israel, do so as a challenge to the Arab world, and to the Palestinians in particular, to respond in kind, and voice without ambiguity their recognition of legitimate Jewish national rights in Israel." The strategy is an attempt to place the onus of responsibility on the Arab world rather than the "blessing from heaven."

Such a position on its merits is hardly likely to provide ammunition to those who seek a weakening of fundamental support for Israel. However, by distorting the position and denying Jewish "doves" a place within the consensus of support for Israel's basic rights and essential security needs, Mr. Shattan provides precisely that interpretation of "dissent" within the Jewish community most likely to hearten Israel's enemies.

ROBERT LOEB
Executive Director, Breira
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It would be bootless to respond to Joseph Shattan's ill-tempered attack on Breira by way of organizations that it has had nothing to do with, *viz.* MERIP [Middle East Research and Information Project] and CONAME [Committee on New Alternatives in the Middle East], especially since the latter was an organization clearly committed to Israel's safe continuance. But many of Mr. Shattan's facts are simply wrong: I have personally had a record of many years insisting on the right of the Jewish Defense League to be heard, including a long-standing conflict with the Anti-Defamation League which has been turning in their names to the FBI. A representative of the JDL was invited to appear before our Breira conference this year. We do not

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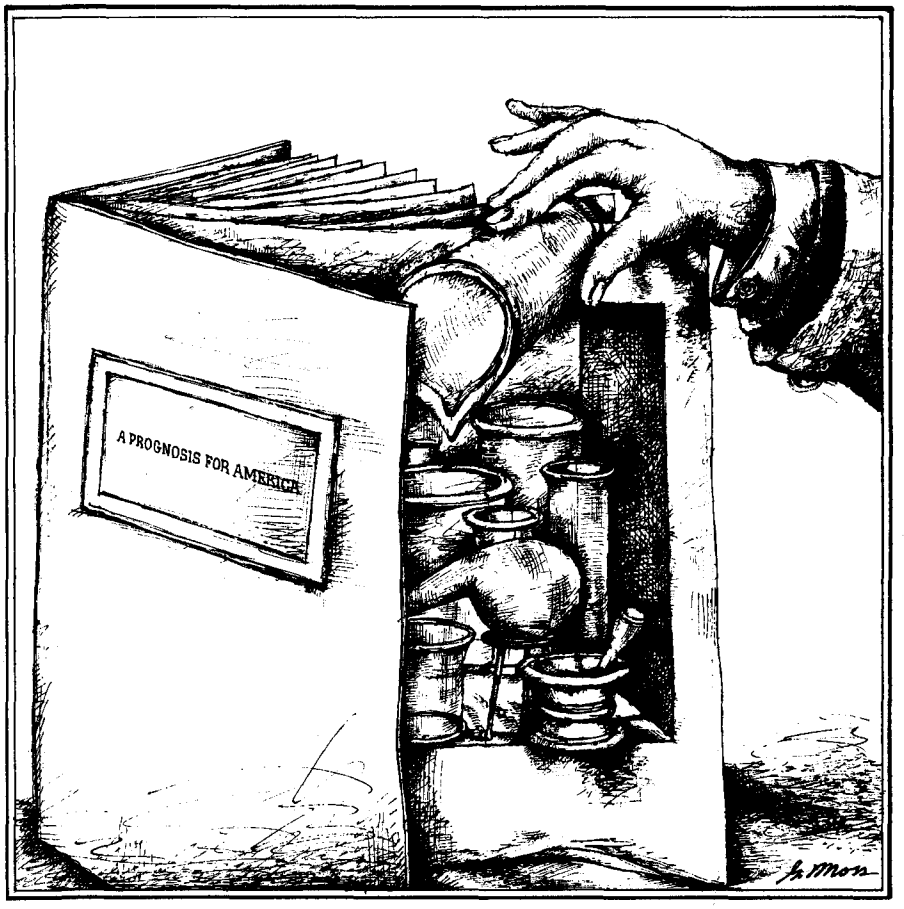

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practice our enemies' refusal to give fair hearing to many different views, as Michael Wyschogrod, Wolfe Kelman, and Charles Liebman, all featured conference speakers, attest. Our publication, *inter-Change,* unlike COMMENTARY, is open to the widest variety of Jewish and non-Jewish opinion.

Mr. Shattan is wrong about Mark Bruzonsky, who is no supporter of ours, and about Barry Rubin, who is no supporter of the PLO. He is wrong about [Rabbi Joachim Prinz's reference to] "Arthur," whose last name is Samuelson and not Waskow. He is wrong about Rabbi Prinz's dignified dissent from our policy, and about Sharon Rose, who never came anywhere near Breira. He is ignorant about most of the persons and all of the policies which mark our group's attempt to unite Israel and the Diaspora in a search for peace and justice in both places. He thinks Rael Jean Isaac's pamphlet is unbiased research because he never troubled to hear Balfour Brickner's or William Novak's refutation of it.

The other shoe has finally dropped and COMMENTARY is at last enlisted in the anti-Breira crusade. Neither surprised nor enlightened, we go on with our work.

[Rabbi] ARNOLD JACOB WOLF
Chairperson, Breira
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The present quality of the American Jewish press and periodicals can best be estimated from the following fact: in the firestorm of vituperation against Breira and against me personally that has exploded over the last four months, only one single writer or reporter has called me to ask my own version of the facts about my life and my own comments on the charges made by Rael Isaac. That was a young woman writer for *Kol Yavneh,* the magazine of an Orthodox student group which gives total support to Gush Emunim. When I told her that only she had bothered to call me, there was a long silence and then she said, "I don't see how I could have written an honest story without talking to you and at least hearing your views."

Amen v'amen. Someone taught her a decent understanding of Jewish values and Jewish tradition, as well as a decent respect for honest journalism. But how sad that not a single "professional" reporter thought of that, nor the "scholar" Rael Isaac, nor the "recent Ph.D." who did COMMENTARY's own attack.

Since he did not call in advance to check on the facts, I will list some of the most egregious falsehoods about me that appear in his article, in the order of the misstatements. But I should add that to my knowledge there are many misstatements about other people and about many institutions.

1. I have never held seminars for members of Congress on the Palestinian question or any Middle East question, under Breira's auspices or anyone else's.

2. I do not "claim to be a Zionist," but to be searching my way toward a Jewish world view that would incorporate parts of both Zionism and Diaspora Jewish nationalism—the best of both Ahad Ha'am and Simon Dubnow—while rejecting the absolutism of those classical Zionists who argued that *only* in *Eretz Yisrael* could the Jewish people be free, and those classical Bundists who argued that the project of a Jewish state was a disaster for the Jewish people. Such an ideology should be rooted in the reality of an *Am Olam,* a "World Eternal People," that both controls one nation-state and lives as a minority in various quite different kinds of Diasporas. At the Breira conference I spoke on "Jewish Politics" in such a light, but of course your article covers no such substantive events.

3. I did not "share a post-office box" with MERIP. One person who had been a member of an organization I was part of, Jews for Urban Justice, in 1971, as part of a major transition in her life, joined MERIP. She used JUJ's post-office box number in placing an ad for MERIP, without JUJ's permission or knowledge. When we discovered the fact, JUJ rebuked her and she left JUJ. The only relation I have had with MERIP was writing an angry letter to it denouncing its use of gentle and supportive words in regard to Palestinian terrorism against Israel. That letter was published in *MERIP Reports,* and I am sure was available to Mrs. Isaac and your writer.

4. Rabbi Prinz's June 1975 letter

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to Bob Loeb referred to another "Arthur," not me—and indeed at the time I was "nowhere even listed as a key figure in Breira" precisely because I did not have such a role. This is one of the clearest examples of how your writer's bias was so extreme and his reckless disregard of the facts so total and his dependence on the vituperative Jewish press so great that he simply stated a flat falsehood.

5. My Op-Ed piece in the New York *Times*, December 16, 1976, explicitly did not "state as fact that the PLO leadership was ready to accept the legitimacy of Israel." My article quoted the two PLO doves whom we met as asserting this. The article ended by saying that an Israeli statement of readiness to exchange "a peace treaty with guarantees of Israeli security for an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza" would "force the PLO as a whole to choose" whether to accept peace. Obviously if I believe the PLO must be forced to choose, I cannot believe it has already chosen.

6. Contrary to the statement in your article, Breira's supporters—including our chairperson, Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf, Bob Loeb, and myself—have publicly and explicitly urged that the Jewish Defense League be given a fair hearing. Indeed, both Wolf and I publicly attacked the Anti-Defamation League for working hand-in-glove with the FBI in its surveillance of the JDL (see the Media, Pennsylvania, FBI files); I have publicly appeared with and debated against a JDL leader before a Jewish audience; Loeb circulated Meir Kahane's pamphlet on democracy in Jewish life to Breira people as an important analysis; and Wolf arranged for a JDL leader to address the Breira conference even after the JDL had tried physically to disrupt the conference. At the same time, to call JDL "Breira's counterpart on the Right," although Breira has never counseled, supported, or participated in violence or attempted to disrupt any other organization's meetings, and although JDL does *not* support Breira's right to be heard as Breira has supported JDL's—is a travesty on the word "counterpart."

7. Your writer, interestingly enough, leaves three dots in his quotation from my *Nation* article precisely where there appeared these words: "This Israeli government is not behaving toward the Palestinian people with anything like the ferocity that the U.S. government used on Vietnam—but the *internal* damage the Israeli government is doing to Israel itself is even worse than the damage the U.S. government did to America" (emphasis in the original). The sentence comes out of my own deep love for Israel—strengthened by my stay there in 1975 and undergirded by my worry over the terrible strain the endless war is putting on Israel. It expresses, in short, that *ahavat Yisrael* that your writer says he is looking for in Breira. There are many other such sentences in that article. Why did he leave them out—and why did he deliberately excise this one from the quotation he chose to use?

Any one of these false statements might be ascribed to carelessness, but all of them put together feels like more than that. It feels like a furious maneuver to turn attention away from the real and agonizing issues of how to protect Israel and revitalize American Jewish life, toward made-up gossip about mail boxes and unconnected organizations.

But why is such an effort being made now? I offer a hypothesis: that precisely because COMMENTARY and the *Jewish Week* and the *American Zionist* have run out of creative ideas for protecting and revitalizing Israel and Jewry, they rage at Breira, which is taking new approaches toward those questions. That since Breira's ideas are making sense to more and more Jews, since Breira adopted a serious and realistic platform at its national conference, there is less and less hay to be made in arguing against those ideas in a principled way. That therefore it is necessary to make false statements about the ideas and the people—and indeed to avoid at all costs actually publishing the Breira platform.

For some Jewish newspapers and magazines it is more important to protect their own institutional self-interests than to encourage an intelligent discussion about how to protect and revitalize Israel and the Jewish people. When much of the Jewish press becomes so intellectually corrupt, the only reasonable responses are to reach Jews by publishing in the general journals that Jews read—and to create a new and truthful and life-giving Jewish press, like Breira's *inter-Change*.

So be it. If this were not a matter

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of life and death for the Jewish people, it would be easy for us to avoid the vituperative attacks by turning to other questions. But those old-line groups that have come to a dead end in their ideas endanger not only themselves but all Jews. So precisely because we love the Jewish people, we cannot turn away from this debate.

ARTHUR I. WASKOW
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is a tragic indication of exactly how far COMMENTARY has moved away from what, regardless of its increasing drift to the Right, was a position of intellectual and moral integrity that the vicious attack on the Jews who make up Breira by Rael Jean Isaac should be referred to in your April issue as "a well-documented pamphlet." This lie—for that is what it is, plain and simple—is then used as a basis to distill and further refine the pamphlet for an audience which might be tempted to believe that anything published in COMMENTARY must be, at least, basically accurate.

To mention just a few facts—as against Joseph Shattan's wicked distortions—Bob Loeb and John Ruskay left CONAME to found Breira because they couldn't get a hearing for their *Jewish* position in the older organization; Arthur Waskow has recently been pushed out of IPS [Institute for Policy Studies] for being "too hung up on Torah," the MERIP crowd is known to despise Art for his "Zionist views," and *no* MERIP person has membership in Breira. Furthermore, Joachim Prinz, in his letter to Bob Loeb, quoted on p. 63, was referring to Arthur Samuelson (a young Hashomer-type Zionist editing *interChange*), and not Waskow. Finally, not only does Breira believe in giving *all* Jews a fair hearing, but even after the physical assault on our members by misguided JDL youth at the Breira conference—an attack which came as these "un-Jewish" Breiraniks were chanting after-meal prayers—the chair ruled that JDL's Bonnie Pechter could address the conference for ten minutes.

But since so many others will surely be writing you about Shattan's carelessly cribbed "facts," let me address myself to just one point here. Shattan claims that "it soon became evident . . . that the one subject that held Breira's interest was the fate of the Palestinians. . ." And he concludes with the slanderous claim that the kind of peace that *Shattan says* Waskow takes credit for bringing about in Vietnam is what Breira wants for Israel, ". . . the peace of obliteration, the peace of the grave. . . ." (And how convenient for the Isaac-Shattan ilk that Waskow's disdain for middle-class and middle-aged standards of dress and style makes him a perfect stereotype for those who wish to present Breira as led by a band of dangerous hippie radicals.)

I am an officer of Breira. Would Shattan like to challenge my Jewish credentials? They include a lifelong commitment to Zionism and Jewish survival, expressed as a youngster in Habonim, and as a mature woman in every article or essay I have ever written (and there are a few); active, dues-paying membership in a respectable, if Reconstructionist, synagogue; and last, but obviously not least, two children and two grandchildren in Israel. Needless to say, the Jewish commitment, knowledge, and achievement of my fellow Breira board members more than match my own. It is not, therefore, our concern for the Palestinians, but with the Jewish state, that motivates our efforts to help create a climate for peace in the Middle East. As Jews devoted to the highest ethical principles of Judaism we are naturally disturbed by anything within the Jewish state which not only falls far short of the dreams of the Zionist founders, but actually corrupts our people more every day. Thus, we do care, as feeling human beings, for what the Israeli occupation has meant to the people of the West Bank and Gaza, whose national aspirations have been fired by our own example, but, *as Jews,* our main concern is with what exploiting cheap Arab labor does to the foundations of the state that was built to bring Jews back to the land; with what is happening to our young Jewish soldiers as the situation exacerbates in the territories, and as they are forced to become more brutal, more hardened, more removed from the gentle and compassionate people we have always been.

We want a peace that will enable Israel to deal with its dangerous social gap, with a sick economy which includes growing corruption at the top and increasing disaffection in the middle and at the bottom, as well as with the problem of how to integrate Israeli Arabs realistically so that they will want to remain *Israelis.* It is not for love of the Arabs—although, unlike COMMENTARY's favorite writers, we do not see them, least of all the Palestinians who at least have some reason to resent us, as being in quite the same category as the architects of Auschwitz—but for love of the Jewish people and *Eretz Yisrael* that we are building—and will continue to build—a Diaspora movement that addresses itself to these and related questions.

I invite your readers to read the platform statements drafted at the Breira conference in February to judge for themselves what is at work in the smear campaign which COMMENTARY has now, despicably, joined.

INGE LEDERER GIBEL
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Shattan's article adds little light to the increasingly acrimonious debate over the legitimacy of Breira. It is a wholehearted endorsement of Rael Jean Isaac's pamphlet, *Breira: Counsel for Judaism,* which Mr. Shattan summarizes, paraphrases, and quotes, but never questions or analyzes. This pamphlet deserves to be exposed for what it is—a cleverly written, superficially convincing, political propaganda piece and hatchet job—rather than to be reproduced uncritically in the pages of COMMENTARY. . . .

But Mr. Shattan's article is most pernicious in its misrepresentation of Breira's position. It is simply not the case that Breira places the full burden of guilt on Israel while attributing to Arab leaders a burning desire for peace. There is little naiveté, and certainly no "unconscious racism," in the view of the Arabs maintained by Breira. Its position is based on the assumption that the forces at work in the Arab world are not essentially different from those operating in Israel or in any other political configuration: that among Arab leaders and within the PLO, as in Israel, there is a *spectrum* of attitudes, including more moderate and more extreme positions; that the Israeli policy most promising for peace would be to strengthen the stance of the Arab moderates at the expense of the extremists; that this can be done by showing that the Arabs, and especially the Palestinians, have something concrete to

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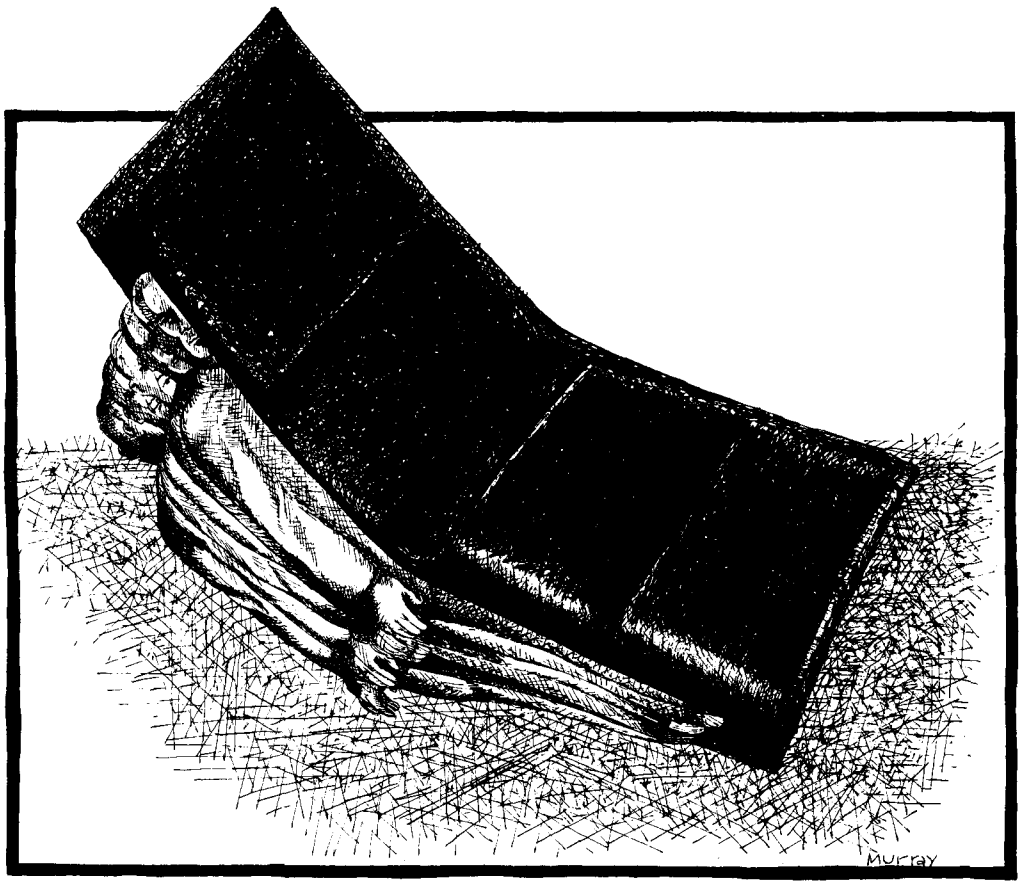

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gain by moderation; that, specifically, a formal Israeli statement of ultimate willingness to recognize some form of Palestinian political entity on land from which Israel would withdraw as part of a final peace treaty, and to negotiate immediately with any delegated representatives of the Palestinian people who would recognize the legitimacy of Israel and renounce the use of violence against it, would exert great pressure on the PLO to make the desired changes in its Covenant. This is a serious position, which deserves to be debated on its merits, not dismissed, as it is by Mrs. Isaac and Mr. Shattan, as a rationalization for the desire "to distance oneself as a Jew from Israel's fate."

One final point, about self-righteousness. In virtually the only substantive argument raised in her entire pamphlet, Mrs. Isaac asks how Breira can be so sure that a Palestinian state will aid in the cause of peace, rather than become an irredentist base against Israel. While there are good arguments for the Breira position, the final answer, of course, is that no one can be absolutely sure. On the other hand, how can Mrs. Isaac and her backers be so sure that Breira is wrong? Apparently, it never even occurs to those who espouse the position of the Israeli Right that their policy —no recognition of the Palestinian people, no negotiations under any circumstances with the PLO, not one inch of the land to be returned —*might* be strengthening the hands of the Arab extremists and destroying any possibility of peace, thus consigning Israel to round after round of ever bloodier war. Absolute certainty about the future lies beyond any of us. This is a good reason why Jews committed to Israel's flourishing survival should not dissipate their energies in tearing down one another. It is also a good reason why COMMENTARY should not have lent its prestige to such a malicious attack.

[Rabbi] MARC SAPERSTEIN
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Much of Joseph Shattan's "Why Breira?" seems based on Rael Jean Isaac's *Breira: Counsel for Judaism*, a pamphlet Mr. Shattan claims is "scrupulous in its respect for evidence." Indeed, Mr. Shattan apparently accepts the allegations of the Isaac pamphlet *in toto*; he does not dispute a single "fact" thereof. I am convinced that, having read Mrs. Isaac's pamphlet, Mr. Shattan made no serious attempt to verify its allegations. I know for a fact that he made no effort to contact the Breira office in New York, Arthur Waskow and Barry Rubin in Washington, or many other figures discussed in his piece. Space and time limitations only allow me to deal with three of the more pernicious aspects of Mr. Shattan's article.

1. The maligning of Barry Rubin. Taking his cue from Mrs. Isaac, Mr. Shattan correctly states that Mr. Rubin, presently a graduate student in Middle East Studies at Georgetown, was a member of the anti-Zionist MERIP and in 1972 contributed to the *Journal of Palestine Studies*. Mrs. Isaac takes her account of Mr. Rubin's activities up to 1974 and then—curiously and not coincidentally—drops all further mention of him. Small wonder: in 1974, Mr. Rubin repudiated his earlier anti-Israel views and began writing articles on Israel and the Middle East, many of them favorable to an Israeli point of view. . . .

Mr. Shattan compounds Mrs. Isaac's half-truths by noting:

> After August 1974, Rubin's name no longer appeared in *MERIP Reports*, but in September 1975, when the first issue of the Breira newsletter *interChange* came out, Barry Rubin was listed as an associate editor for international affairs. *InterChange* identified him as a doctoral candidate at Georgetown University but neglected to cite either his association with MERIP or with the violently anti-Israel Maoist *Guardian*.

Why *interChange* should list associations which Mr. Rubin had long ago repudiated Mr. Shattan never bothers to explain.

What is so disturbing is not only that Mr. Shattan omits important facts about Mr. Rubin, but that he made not the slightest attempt to inform himself of these facts. . . . Instead, he simply repeated Mrs. Isaac's reprehensible half-truths to perpetuate her character assassination. Mr. Rubin has publicly done his *teshuvah*; it is time for Mrs. Isaac and Mr. Shattan to do theirs.

2. No less shameless are Mr. Shattan's distortions by quoting out of context. Quoting from a resolution "adopted at the [Breira] national conference," he claims it affirms that " 'certain Arab countries and Palestinian leaders are willing to recognize Israel's right to exist.' " Mr. Shattan cites this as part of his "evidence" that "what Breira has primarily managed to do is lend a seal of Jewish approval to the idea that the party at 'fault' in the Middle East is . . . the 3 million Israelis. . . ."

Having chaired the commission which drafted the resolution to which Mr. Shattan refers, I am quite familiar with its content. It might be helpful for COMMENTARY readers to read the full paragraph from which Mr. Shattan takes his quotation—I will leave it to them to determine whether he has quoted fairly and accurately and whether it bears out his contention that Breira's approach is one-sided:

> We take note of indications that certain Arab countries and Palestinian leaders are willing to recognize Israel's right to exist. We call upon these, as well as other Arab spokesmen, to publicly acknowledge and confirm these indications and, further, to clarify that they recognize Israel's right to exist as a sovereign Jewish state within secure boundaries. Such a recognition is essential to successful peace negotiations. In the case of the Palestine Liberation Organization, this would mean an amendment to the Palestine National Covenant removing those clauses which call for the dismantling of the state of Israel and the renunciation of the use of violence and terror against civilian populations.

3. Finally, there is Mr. Shattan's repeated manipulation of facts which are often non-germane and taken out of context, as well as his omission of important facts which do not conform to his and Mrs. Isaac's thesis that Breira is "New Leftist" or at least universalist in orientation. For example, Mr. Shattan notes that Samuel Rubin is one of the Institute for Policy Studies' "financial 'angels,' " but neglects to tell us that Mr. Rubin is also a major financial backer of Breira and—far more importantly—that he has given literally hundreds of thousands of dollars to the UJA and is a former president of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation.

Mr. Shattan informs us that Robert Loeb and John Ruskay, respectively Breira's executive director and secretary, were members of CONAME. He writes, "Presumably, they felt, like Barry Rubin, that a

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specifically Jewish organization campaigning on behalf of 'Palestinian needs' would be more effective than a non-Jewish one." Well, one wishes Mr. Shattan wouldn't "presume" so much. The facts are that both Loeb and Ruskay left CONAME because of its increasingly anti-Israel orientation.

Mr. Shattan also discusses a plethora of individuals—Sharon Rose, William Kunstler, Howard Zinn, Irene Gendzier, among others—who have never been involved with Breira in any way. On the other hand, he neglects to mention that Breira's fourteen-member executive committee includes a staff member of the American Jewish Committee, a leader of the federation of a Midwestern city, a professor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the former chairman of the Philadelphia Zionist Federation. In addition, the reader of his article would hardly know that *inter-Change,* Breira's monthly periodical which is read by many non-Breira members, has featured articles on Jewish education, Soviet Jewry, *tzedakah* collectives, and the decline and neglect of poor Jewish neighborhoods, as well as articles on Israel and the Middle East.

The Breira point of view is certainly open to vigorous discussion and criticism. Unfortunately, Mr. Shattan has disqualified himself from such serious discussion, first, because he chooses to engage, to a large extent, in *ad hominem* arguments, and second, because he is evidently not familiar with the organization of which he presumes to write. . . .

DAVID M. SZONYI
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Shattan repeats Rael Jean Isaac's charge that the unspoken desire to "distance oneself as a Jew from Israel's fate" is what motivates most of Breira's members to affiliate with the organization. This contention is unfair and irresponsible, and it ignores the highly compelling reason which has led many committed Zionists to embrace Breira: namely, it is the only major Jewish organization in America which advocates that in exchange for peace Israel should be prepared to return to its 1967 borders, with minor rectifications to be agreed on by the parties to the dispute.

Such a position should hardly be considered revolutionary. The American government has advocated this view since the early 70's, and *not a single* American or West European diplomat or politician—including Israel's most devoted friends—has suggested that the final borders should deviate significantly from those of 1967. Yet, despite these realities, Israel insistently repeats its refusal to return to the earlier lines. As a result, Arab propagandists have been able to focus public attention on the issue of Israeli "expansionism" rather than on the question of Arab refusal to recognize Israel—which, as Mr. Shattan correctly states, is the crux of the problem in the Middle East.

It is entirely possible, of course, that a statement by Israel on its willingness to return to its previous borders in exchange for peace would not elicit a meaningful response. For the first time in years, however, the Arabs would be on the defensive. They would be obligated to specify what they mean when they speak of "peace" and to define the concessions which they are prepared to make. Such a development would have great value, even if the concessions were grossly inadequate and the Arab "peace" a fraud; at the very least, Arab proposals would be on the table for all to see. Israel can only benefit by initiating a process which will focus on the nature and scope of the peace which is to be established, rather than remaining tied to the issue of whether or not captured territories are to be returned. If it takes the first course, Israel can expect substantial American support and sympathy; if it takes the second, it will get little or none.

Mr. Shattan is justified, I believe, in suggesting that Arthur Waskow and other Breira leaders have been overly optimistic in their evaluation of Arab intentions. Waskow perceives a degree of moderation which other Breira members, such as myself, do not find evident. Nevertheless, Breira's political positions have been basically sound. It recognized long ago that those Jewish organizations in America which encourage Israel to be stubborn on the matter of territories are doing a disservice to the Jewish state.

ERIC H. YOFFIE
Durham, North Carolina

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am not in a position to comment on the factual reconstruction of the founders, origins, and history of Breira. It is clear to me,

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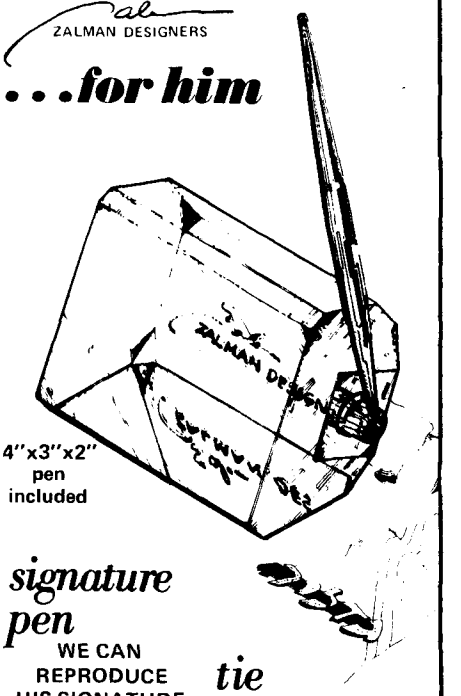

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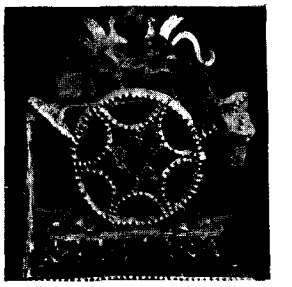

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having compared Rael Jean Isaac's pamphlet on which Joseph Shattan's article is principally based, with William Novak's lengthy, calm, and no less reasoned history of Breira (which appeared in the March-April issue of *genesis 2 . . .*) that the facts which both Mrs. Isaac and Mr. Shattan report are accurate, but invariably partial and therefore tendentious. Undoubtedly some of my colleagues have previous associations and connections which others will find unsavory, but in all of Mr. Shattan's article there is so little direct quotation from the operative policy and position statements of Breira, one is obliged to conclude that Breira is nothing but a Potemkin village, or worse, a front for a couple of personalities a number of people find threatening and irritating. It is obviously more efficient rhetoric to recite the earlier ideological incarnations of Robert Loeb and Arthur Waskow than it is to credit the evolving and changing consensus within Breira. Tar brushes have no subtlety. I wouldn't call such rhetoric McCarthyite, only transparent.

Breira is a young organization, and like all understaffed, underfinanced movements, frequently inefficient, sometimes inept. Letterheads are not reprinted within the hour of someone dropping from the board; decisions are frequently made under pressure to respond without coming under the scrutiny of deliberative and patient consideration. Lapses such as these are regrettable and will diminish as time passes and Breira's staff is less frantically overworked. Breira is, however, a democratic organization; its staff personnel and executive leadership can be changed at the behest of its board. Breira, in other words, does not operate as the pawn of Robert Loeb, Arthur Waskow, or any other conspiracy of gray eminences.

I have been at many organizational meetings of Breira, first as a member of its editorial advisory committee which assists in the publication of its newsletter, *interChange*, and presently as a member of the board, to which I was elected by the membership. In neither function have I observed the wirepulling which Mr. Shattan leads us to believe those Jewish mafiosi, Loeb and Waskow, conduct. If anything, Breira meetings are diffuse, passionate, by no means "single-issued" conclaves; moreover, at none of them have I heard a defense of the PLO, Palestinian terrorism, the dismantling of Israel, all of which Mr. Shattan would imply that I (and others naive like myself) am gulled into accommodating. Perhaps, once, several years ago, when Breira was smaller, more ideological, some of its spokesmen were still uncritically entangled with Third World politics, but I haven't found such in evidence during the nearly two years of my involvement with Breira.

What attracted me to Breira (and what holds my affection and interest) is that Breira strikes me as the only American Jewish organization which can encompass otherwise conflicting constituencies (constituencies which other major organizations would be compelled to winnow into homogeneity). At Breira meetings there are Jews observant and unreligious, Zionist and non-Zionist (like myself), Jewishly well-educated and Jewishly beginners, all of whom are concerned with much more than the resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict, or rather (put more accurately) are concerned for the pacific resolution of that conflict within the context of a significant and revitalized Jewish community in the American Diaspora.

As long as Breira serves the vision of that expanded constituency, its *ahavat Yisrael* will continue—despite Alan Mintz—to encompass not alone the Jews of Israel, but the Jews of America as well, their future and security, as well as my own.

ARTHUR A. COHEN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As a long-standing reader of COMMENTARY and an active member of Breira, I want to offer a comment or two on Joseph Shattan's article. On the surface, it would seem to fit in snugly with COMMENTARY's consistent and well-articulated world view; certainly nobody who reads the magazine would expect it to publish an article favorable to Breira. But editorial policies are not one-dimensional, and Mr. Shattan's article is a severe break with the magazine's long-standing precedent. To the best of my knowledge, COMMENTARY has always been careful to uphold the highest standards of responsibility and accuracy, even when discussing phenomena it doesn't much like.

Mr. Shattan's article is unprecedented because a good deal of what he has to say about Breira is simply not true. He repeats some of the more widely circulated distortions and misrepresentations about Breira, and then goes on to add a few of his own. How is one to take seriously an article which invents its own facts, and which relies upon the judgments and the research of some of the most unreliable and irresponsible sources in Jewish life?

Does it really have to be said that Breira does not support the PLO any more than COMMENTARY does, but that it *does* hold a different view as to the best way to reach a settlement? Or that Breira has no connection to MERIP or any other anti-Israel organization? Or that no reasonable person could conclude that Rael Jean Isaac's pamphlet is "free of any overt bias"? If Mr. Shattan had wanted to draw *serious* connections, he might have looked to the World Zionist Organization, which would have trouble denying a place to Breira should it ask to join.

Mr. Shattan excuses the *Jewish Week* for its wild excesses on the grounds that it cares deeply for Jewish survival. But who will protect Breira—which cares just as deeply—from the wild excesses of Mr. Shattan's irresponsible charges?

WILLIAM NOVAK
Somerville, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Though Joseph Shattan makes some good points, he comes very close to saying that Breira should be dismantled! I hope he doesn't imply that. I also hope that he will do another article, only this time dealing with (wrestling with?) the Breira platform as passed at the February convention. Too much energy is being wasted on whether Breira has a right to exist; not enough energy is being spent on what Breira stands for politically, both vis-à-vis the Middle East and the Jewish community in the *Galut*. We here in Boston Breira, if I may speak for the others, are not spending a great deal of time defending ourselves. We are moving into the educational and political arena, and you will have to follow us there. Breira's position falls within the left-wing side of Mapam, and is therefore a legitimate position and a legitimate alternative. . . .

JACK NUSAN PORTER
Breira
Boston, Massachusetts

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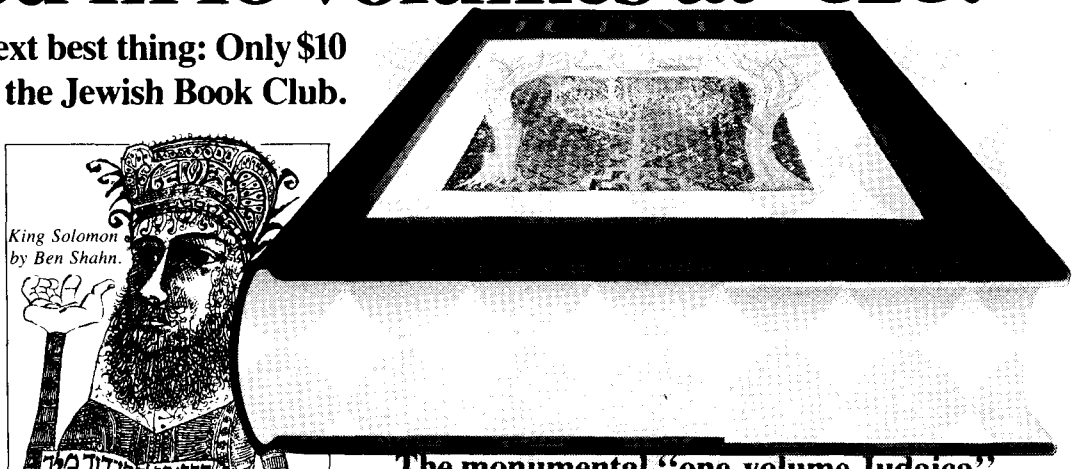

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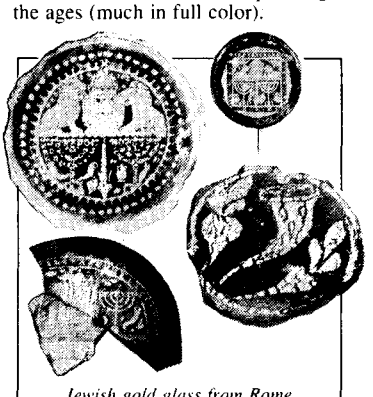

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To the Editor of Commentary:

As someone who knows and admires John Ruskay, I was shocked to see him attacked as one of the wicked elders of anti-Zion in Joseph Shattan's article on Breira. According to the article, Ruskay "has worked on a full-time basis for Breira from the beginning . . . to advance the interests of the Palestine Liberation Organization." Actually, for the past two years Ruskay has worked full time as the director of a Hebrew school, where he has been involved in such suspicious activities as teaching children to dance the hora and sing Israeli songs. I know. I've seen him there.

We Jews are always congratulating ourselves on our independence of thought. "Two Jews, three opinions!" we say proudly, as if it were really true. Actually, Jews in America expend a good deal of energy suppressing independent thought, as the campaign to destroy Breira demonstrates.

That campaign seems effective. Breira will probably disappear soon. What won't disappear, though, is the question Breira might have answered: if military power won't bring peace to Israel, what will?

Norman Kotker

New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

Joseph Shattan speculates on the motives of "liberal Jewish academics and intellectuals" who have supported or been connected with Breira. He suggests a variety of possibilities: "Liberal guilt, a desire to be on the side of 'liberation' and 'progress,' a weariness at having to uphold Israel's cause when that cause has gone out of odor, . . . even an unconscious and paradoxical wish to be, for once, on the side their own government may be leaning toward. . . ." This listing shows a blind refusal to read and credit what such people have to say for themselves. There is an obvious reason that I spelled out in a speech that I published in *interChange*, Breira's publication, which was that some of us believe that there will never be peace in the Middle East, and Israel may be destroyed, unless it expresses clearly and unequivocally its willingness to give up the territories conquered in 1967, in return for peace. That may not bring peace either, but insistence on holding on to substantial parts of the territories certainly never will bring peace. I assume others who find Breira's position attractive believe the same. The purpose of this letter is not to argue this position—I have in *interChange*—but to caution Mr. Shattan against easy ascription of unworthy motives to those with whose politics he disagrees. It is not necessary to "speculate endlessly about [their] motives." Read what they say.

Nathan Glazer

Cambridge, Massachusetts

To the Editor of Commentary:

Breira, whose recent conference occasioned Joseph Shattan's article, is an episode of considerable diagnostic significance for the understanding of the contemporary American Jewish situation. But its current prominence is a characteristic media event. It is a pity that Mr. Shattan's rigorous and astringent analysis, applied to so doughy a substance, will probably prolong the half-life of Breira by one further irrelevant polemic.

The Breira convention was followed by a string of reported resignations by prominent rabbis and writers and academics said to have been members earlier. But a rejoinder to attacks on Breira, published by William Novak in *genesis 2*, tells us that many of those mentioned—Nathan Glazer, Rabbi Joachim Prinz—were not ever really members at all: at most they were on a so-called "advisory committee."

It happens that I have personal knowledge how this could come about and how little it means. The masthead of *interChange* has two names of close friends and colleagues of mine. In one case, the agreement to "advise" was accompanied by an explicit statement that the scholar in question totally opposed characteristic Breira positions like that on the PLO. In the other case, no express permission was ever asked, or given, for the inclusion of the name in question on the *interChange* masthead. Only the fear that they might be caught up in abetting a "witch-hunt," I am told, keeps these names from being withdrawn from the alleged foundation of the Breira structure. Just who is intimidating whom becomes a very subtle issue, sometimes.

Now it is true of course that the availability of relatively large numbers of vaguely sympathetic persons permits a tight-knit, determined minority, with clear-cut aims, to control significant power; and this is the point Mr. Shattan, using data published by Rael Jean Isaac, is making. But how tight-knit is the minority in question, and above all how clear are its goals? There is no question that there are some very *determined* people involved, but determined about what?

This too is a matter on which I happen to have some slight, but illuminating, information. Some time after a meeting in Washington where I met Arthur Waskow and his group for the first (and only) time, I got a call from one of their leaders. It seems that having recently decided that they were Bundists, they felt the need to learn something about the Bund, and they hoped I could provide a bibliography. However, as Henry J. Tobias's study had not yet appeared, and they were unable to cope with material in Yiddish, I was unable to be of help. Now, it is not necessarily fatal to the strategic clarity of a cohesive group to approach ideological issues in a spirit of *chutzpa* and *am-aratzut* [ignorance]. But when we have other evidence that a group does not know what it wants, such cavalier attitudes toward ideology lead us to suspect that they have no clear or coherent strategy at all, but only some common prejudices.

Waskow at the time I met him —at a meeting arranged by the B'nai B'rith—boasted of being an unindicted co-conspirator unjustly left out of the dock in the trial of the Chicago Seven for the events at the 1968 Democratic convention. There was the clear impression that, vigorously embroiled as he was in Jewish issues, the connection was both accidental and reluctant. Ambivalence, in one mix or another and in varying proportional intensities, is the common element in the Jewish involvement in Breira: the radical student Zionists, the Hillel rabbis and the *Sh'ma* coterie, and the veteran mavericks long dedicated to upholding alienation in dispersion as a way of life especially designated for the Jews. What they have in common is a shared detachment and disenchantment vis-à-vis the so-called Jewish establishment.

None of this is uniquely true of Breira, or even uncommon throughout the range of American Jewish groups. The rise of Israel has raised implicit issues toward which Diaspora Jews almost universally, not to speak of the special

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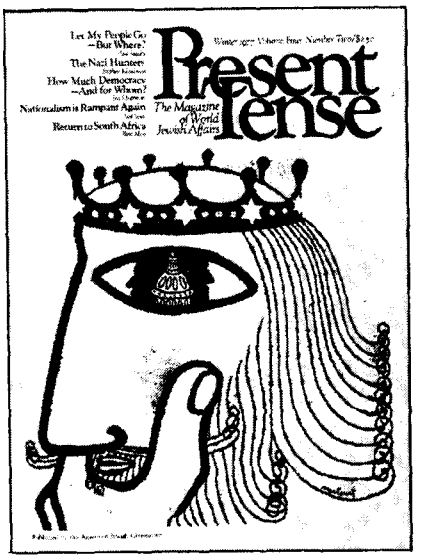

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On searching for roots in Eastern Europe: "Where was my mother's home? Where was the path she must have walked to the Narew River she had told me about? Where was the synagogue and where was the market place?" Sigmund Diamond, Spring '76.

On Jerusalem: "No place on earth offers so many delights to the eye, the ear and the mind as Kollek's Jerusalem, but one must find the time to stand and stare." Chaim Bermant, Spring '74.

On renewed interest in Judaica among young Americans: "The young people perceived themselves as survivors of the failures of Jewish education and the false values of America." Sylvia Rothchild, Summer '75.

On Israel's Nature Reserves: "It may be that General Yoffe's animals will somehow lead the people of the Middle East to peace one day. But the tanks were in the mountains, waiting. The real beast in the desert was still man." Robert Spero, Summer '76.

On being a Jewish poet: "The truest Jewish poetry will be written out of the inward preoccupations of people who happen to be Jews." M. L. Rosenthal, Winter '76.

On the Persian Gulf arms race: "The ramifications of what is happening... extend from the Caspian Sea to the Suez Canal and from the African Coast to Pakistan." Tad Szulc, Spring '75.

On Israel's Arab intellectuals: "I am an Israeli but I cannot be a Jew." Naomi Shepherd, Spring '75.

On American foreign policy: "American companies, which for so long we have considered 'our companies,' have in fact become the policing agents of the Arabs' boycott against the U.S." Paul Dickson, Spring '74.

On South Africa: "To live with such a system of laws, with certificates of racial purity, with leaders who admired Hitler, to live in South Africa as a Jew and to be silent and happy takes some special skills." Rose Moss, Winter '77.

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case of American Jewry, are bound to adopt ambivalent positions. The very existence of Israel, arising in the wake of the Holocaust, is a pledge of survival vital to all alike—and yet also an implicit critique of the Diaspora and a standing reproach to those who prefer to remain there. A commitment to *aliyah*, together with an insistence on the centrality of the Diaspora, like that adopted by Breira, aptly describes the attitude common to most American Zionists and the rest of the American Jewish establishment. Breira was not needed to promulgate this position, and will not survive on this ideology alone.

What does single the conglomerate out is its shared detachment, for various reasons, from the existing establishment committed to the support of Israel. Such detachment, far from being unusual, is typical of every succeeding American Jewish immigration, generation, and new proliferation of occupational, residential, social, and cultural variants. Some then peel off or hang loose at the margins, while others are coopted individually or earn their legitimate entry into the establishment by fiercely attacking the old guard. All these, united but opposed, tendencies are represented in Breira. Under the circumstances, it is hardly a suitable instrument for a revolutionary elite to capture in order to undermine the functioning consensus of American Jewry.

BEN HALPERN
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Shattan's critical analysis of Breira is welcome to those of us who have grown concerned by the direction the organization has taken. Its questionable origins, however, are not as important as the actions sanctioned by the rank-and-file membership, the well-meaning majority.

The insensitivity of Breira is inherent in its very name. Had Breira sought only to offer "a 'choice' for shared responsibility between Israel and the Diaspora" in the reconstitution of a vital Jewish life on *this* continent, the organization's home ground, the notion of a working "alternative" would have been welcome indeed. But in its single-minded preoccupation with the Palestinian question, which dominates local meetings, and not just the national office's pronouncements, Breira declares itself a challenge to the Israeli motto, *ein breira*—"we have no choice." *Ein breira* was not a casual slogan, however; it reflected the grim resolve of an embattled enclave that felt it had no option but to fight, and to sacrifice the individual as the price for collective survival. It is one thing for Israelis themselves to question the notion of *ein breira*. Bound by the same reality and subject to the same risks, they win the right to interpret the experience for themselves. But for a group of untried American Jews, with nothing more at stake than a liberal conscience, to declare blithely, *you* have a choice, is *chutzpa* of the most unsavory kind.

It should be borne in mind that Israeli foreign policy is the policy of a democratically elected government, representing what the majority of Israelis believe to be in their best interest. Since this belief is backed by their willingness to die, or to serve great stretches of army service, in its defense, it ought to be treated by their unthreatened American Jewish friends with respect, if not awe. Members of Breira have been accusing the "rightist establishment" of various indelicacies. Surely there has been nothing quite so indelicate in American Jewish life of recent years as this widespread assumption on the part of our new political philanthropists that "we know better than you what is in your best interest."

But if Breira has been insensitive, it has lately also grown dangerous. Like the Russian *maskilim* ("enlighteners") of the 19th century, who went to the Czar with a list of reforms to be foisted on their less enlightened Jewish brethren—because they knew what was in the Jewish interest even if the Jewish majority did not—so Breira now approaches the American government to convince Americans that they must bring pressure to bear on an Israel that does not know what is in *its* best interest. And like the *maskilim*, members of Breira are convinced of their intellectual and moral superiority in taking this treacherous step. But we know, as the enlighteners ought to have known, that the Czar worked in *his* interest, not in the interest of the Jews, and used whatever Jewish support he could get neatly to camouflage his ends. The decision of a Jewish group to appeal to the powers-that-be against the perceived self-interest of Israel (and the Jewish body politic) now, when as Mr. Shattan rightly says, "the political fortunes of the state of Israel have reached perhaps an all-time low," is dangerous, to use the mildest available term.

American Jews, acting as Jews, can only protect Israel's right to self-determination. When they begin to subvert that right, the constituted community has not only the right but the duty to expose their actions and to condemn them. In so doing it is not being "McCarthyite" or even vengeful, just minimally responsible.

RUTH R. WISSE
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The American Jewish community stands in debt to COMMENTARY and Joseph Shattan for a lucid, thoughtful presentation on a timely subject—the attack-from-within carefully mounted by Breira against one of Israel's vital lifelines, the united American Jewish community. . . .

I take issue with Mr. Shattan, however, with respect to the platform adopted at Breira's recent convention, which, in his words, "reflects a moderating tendency." "Tendency" may be too strong a word—"gloss" may be more apt. True, the platform draws back from one or two of the more extreme statements by Breira spokesmen, such as those suggesting that the Israelis deal with the PLO without preconditions. There are preconditions in the Breira platform now, but it still promotes the PLO.

At the Breira convention there were two "commissions" ("The Essential Elements for an Arab-Israeli Peace" and "U.S. Policy in the Middle East") whose contributions to the Breira platform have a familiar ring, and whose resolutions carry forward several long-standing Breira positions in terms which do not fit well with the word "moderate." Most importantly, these resolutions propose a "Palestinian" state on territories to be vacated by Israel. This position is in direct opposition to that of the Israeli government, whose unequivocal opposition to a "Palestinian" West Bank state was reiterated, emphatically, by no less a spokesman than Shlomo Avineri, Director General of the Israeli Foreign Office, at the recent Policy Conference of the

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American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). . . .

The resolutions also reiterate . . . the . . . Breira position of urging the Israelis to deal with the PLO. And again, in continuity with Breira's past positions, the resolutions call for "the immediate cessation of Jewish settlement of the occupied territories." Similarly, on Jerusalem, Breira keeps the continuity, and, as before, seems to envisage a change in the present status of Jewish control: "While Jerusalem will continue to serve as the capital of Israel, the Arab part of the city could become, after the establishment of peace, the capital of a Palestinian Arab state." On borders, the resolutions call for Israeli "willingness to negotiate on the basis of June 4, 1967 borders with such rectifications of those borders without which Israel's security would be clearly and substantially affected." Is this an example of "moderation"? Why does Breira back off so far from the simple and clear phrase, "defensible borders"? Moderation, indeed!

Throughout, the Breira platform repeatedly and deliberately highlights the phony concept of "Palestinian" nationalism—a concept recently explained by a PLO leader as a "new tool" in the continuing battle against Israel. Zoheir Muhsin of the PLO is quoted in the Dutch newspaper *Trouw* on March 31, 1977: "Only for political reasons do we carefully stress our Palestinian identity, for it is in the national interest of the Arabs to encourage the Palestinian existence against Zionism. Yes, the existence of a separate Palestinian identity serves only tactical purposes. The founding of a Palestinian state is a new tool in the continuing battle against Israel." . . .

It has been pointed out . . . that some notable commentators have characterized the Breira program as being acceptable to Zionist groups. "Moderate" or not, it is unacceptable in Zionist terms, if the word "Zionist" is not to be bleached of all its meaning.

The analyses provided by Mr. Shattan, and others, have made it clear that Breira's attack-from-within is no sudden superficial effort. We know that it is well-financed, and that the specific targets range from the Congress to the campus. COMMENTARY is to be congratulated for providing the kind of information we need to understand and to

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deal with Breira and with Breira-type organizations.

HENRY GOLDMAN
Louis D. Brandeis District
Zionist Organization of America
Silver Spring, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It seems captious to fault the accuracy with which Joseph Shattan defines the position of Breira and the perceptiveness with which he explains "the significance of Breira as a phenomenon." Perhaps it is a matter of emphasis, but he fails to stress the extent to which that organization put itself in jeopardy by the magnitude of the bet that Breira had made on the PLO and the extent to which Breira had mortgaged its future to the outcome of the mid-March Palestine National Council conference in Cairo.

Breira might well have survived the resignations of Joachim Prinz, Jacob Neusner, and Nathan Glazer. The carefully documented exposé by Rael Jean Isaac was damaging but perhaps not fatal. Even the repudiation of Breira by one of its begetters, Alan Mintz, together with Mark Bruzonsky's reversal, in the April 12 international edition of the Jerusalem *Post*, of his previous pro-Breira position might have been explained away, given Breira's characteristic imaginativeness with the facts.

Breira did itself in as a credible organization by the abandonment of its original broad program: alternatives for Diaspora Jewry in dealing with our communal problems, with our relationship to Israel, with the problem of peace in the Middle East. Its entire platform was reduced to one narrow issue: the crypto-moderation of the Palestinians versus the intransigence of Israel, focused on the West Bank.

It was a very big bet to place on a very long shot. The charges of "McCarthyism," "guilt by association," "character assassination" that Mr. Shattan will evoke in these columns are by now irrelevant. Had there been heard one conciliatory bat's squeak out of the Cairo conference, a battalion of Isaacs reviewed by a platoon of Shattans could not have forestalled the vindication of Breira. Instead, as reported in the March 19 New York *Times*, the "draft resolution submitted by the 'moderate' majority calls for 'armed action against the Zionist entity and the liberation of all Palestinian soil.'" As it now stands, the approval by the Palestine National Council of a 15-point program for the armed struggle against Israel and the reaffirmation of the PLO's goal of Israel's destruction, has finished Breira as a significant influence on the Jewish scene.

It is really a pity. Breira had the opportunity to provide a forum for the free discussion of the whole spectrum of issues facing American Jewry. Instead, its monomania has resulted in the disarray and eclipse of what could have been a valuable movement.

ROBERT A. RIESMAN
Providence, Rhode Island

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I applaud Joseph Shattan's article, "Why Breira?" His insightful analysis of Breira's insidious attempts to present Israel as the intransigent party in the Middle East conflict and to champion the PLO proves beyond a shadow of a doubt —for those who still had any doubts —that the "peace" Breira seeks for Israel is the "peace of obliteration."

I am sure that Breira's *hasidim* will piously cry foul and accuse COMMENTARY of conducting a McCarthyite witch-hunt. One tires of their attempts to deflect attention from the issue—the danger of a Breira-type solution to the Middle East conflict—by accusing the Jewish community of stifling dissent.

Breira's actions prove the timeliness of Isaiah's prophecy: "Your destroyers shall come from among you" (Isaiah 49:17).

DEBORAH E. LIPSTADT
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Shattan's lucid "Why Breira?" is a much needed Guide for the Perplexed. I knew vaguely that Breira was an American Jewish organization which pursued a dovish line in Israeli affairs, but since I have no prescription for solving the Arab-Israeli conflict (I suffer from an ornithological identity crisis—I am neither a dove nor a hawk), I saw no reason to condemn those who believed they had the solution—though I felt that Breira's was the wrong approach, even for doves. The participation of many decent and some highly meritorious persons in the ranks of Breira, and the fact that Breira had managed to provide a spark in an otherwise increasingly apathetic environment, presented a dilemma: was it right to push, by an all-out attack, the good apples into a position where they had to shield the bad ones, or was it better to give Breira a chance to redeem itself?

Then I read Rael Jean Isaac's pamphlet, which gave me a jolt . . .; the more so since the facts which she presented were so impressive that her comments and conclusions were almost unnecessary. This pamphlet could only be refuted if the facts could be discredited. . . .

My friends in Breira told me that an answer to Mrs. Isaac which William Novak (executive editor of the Boston-based *Moment* magazine and a book reviewer for the *Village Voice*) was writing would lay my apprehensions to rest. The answer appeared in the March-April issue of *genesis 2* . . . obviously too late for the purposes of Mr. Shattan's article. Unfortunately, Mr. Novak could not discredit Mrs. Isaac's facts. On the contrary, he admitted that "Rael Isaac's facts are mostly correct. . . her work is carefully done, well researched." But the surprising gist of his answer is that Mrs. Isaac's facts, work, and research are "completely irrelevant to Breira." In other words, the past (or present) associations of Waskow, Loeb, Ruskay, etc. in CONAME, MERIP, or the Institute for Policy Studies, all three viciously anti-Israel and pro-PLO, have no importance whatsoever. . . .

While Mr. Novak bravely whistles in the dark, one of my contacts in Breira is not so happy about the most conspicuous spokesmen of the movement. "But don't worry," he consoles me, "they are outnumbered and closely watched." One must wonder why anybody would want to belong to an organization whose leading personalities have to be "closely watched."...

It may be Israel's good fortune, however, that it can rely more on the PLO than on Breira. While Breira spokesmen, whether Dan Gillon or General Peled, "know" that the PLO has forsworn the annihilation of Israel, the Palestine National Council, in its recent Assembly in Cairo, proved just the opposite.

I consider Mr. Shattan's piece irrefutable. I understand that it is difficult for men of intellect to admit that they have been fellow-travelers of a hoax, innocents in a deadly game whose losers would not be they, but the citizens of Is-

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Why Breira?

A thoughtful answer from a tough critic.

". . . the time has come to challenge that attitude within Jewish life which has frequently frozen out people who have represented positions which may be unpopular in some circles . . . This is periodically and ritually denied, but anyone who has run afoul of this taboo knows all too well that it is invoked . . .

As one who has consistently criticized Breira's lopsided position on Israel, . . . I feel compelled to say that Breira is the inevitable product of a Jewish community which has successfully closed off dissident opinion. (emphasis added)

. . . We have nothing to fear from divergent views. We have much to fear from the development of a climate in which dissenters become targets for personal recrimination and attacks on their Zionist loyalties . . . The policy of freezing out dissent is bankrupt. It must be displaced by openness and trust in a deeper ability by American Jews to responsibly deal with differences than some of their leaders seem to understand."

Rabbi David Polish
Jewish Week, Feb. 27, 1977

Let us open the debate on the *issues*.
Consider this *alternative*.

". . . what if there was a different Israeli policy? . . . Could American Jews support a different policy more effectively, and with less threat to their position?

I fear that by asking these questions I will be interpreted as saying that because American Jews may find their position uncomfortable they should moderate their support for Israel, and press Israel against its better judgement to undertake policies that may increase the risk of another holocaust. This is not what I am saying . . .

I—and others, in Israel, and out—believe there is . . . a policy which I suspect most American opinion—perhaps most American Jewish opinion—*thought* was Israeli policy after the 1967 war, but which in recent years, it has become clear, is less and less Israel's policy. The policy I have in mind is for Israel to say and mean that *all* the gains of the 1967 war will be given up for real peace—recognition, open frontiers, trade, guarantees for peace—and for Israel to say it will talk to any parties to the dispute face to face to achieve such a settlement . . .

I know the difficulties Israel faces as a democratic state in adopting such a policy, but if this policy is the means by which support from the US may continue to be assured and peace may ultimately be glimpsed, too, then Israeli leaders must be bold enough to propose it and argue for it with their people . . .

. . . The present course is clearly dangerous to Israel's survival; the alternative offers some hope . . .

Nathan Glazer
interChange, a publication of
Breira, November, 1976

You decide.

We'll send you the full text of Nathan Glazer's article. We'll also include a copy of the proceedings of Breira's first national conference. *Take the time to consider the issues Breira has raised and find out for yourself where we stand.* Then make up your own mind.

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rael. But the many decent and genuine friends of Israel who provide Breira with the window dressing of responsibility should deny the organization their implicit approval. At this stage, these friends can do the cause of Israel but one service: to withdraw and to leave Breira to its thus isolated manipulators. . . .

BENNO WEISER VARON
Brookline, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . .What seems to me very striking about the controversy surrounding Rael Jean Isaac's pamphlet on Breira is the way the earnest supporters of dissent in Breira have carefully kept away from discussing the *substance* of her remarks and concentrated instead on characterizing her pamphlet (which is carefully documented and quite civil in tone) as "vitriolic" and "reckless" (*Moment*). Actually, a great deal of the documentation consists of direct quotations from the parties involved. All they have to do is to deny they said what they are quoted as saying. This, of course, they cannot do, since it is a matter of record. . . .

NORMA FREEDMAN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

When Breira is criticized, it complains of "McCarthyite" suppression of free expression in the American Jewish community. It is strange that an organization which states that it was specifically founded as a means of expressing dissent should itself resent any dissent from its views. For a small group that complains that its views are being suppressed, however, Breira has had more press of late than almost any other group on the American Jewish scene.

I do not advocate the suppression of any point of view in the American Jewish community. Fortunately, it is in the nature of American Jewry that such suppression would be impossible anyway. But this does not mean that Breira's views should be above criticism.

There is an interesting analogy between Breira today and the American Council for Judaism of a previous day. For a long time public opinion in the American Jewish community tolerated the American Council for Judaism, though many of us bristled at its outrageous statements critical of Zionism during a particularly precarious period in Jewish history.

Most of us tolerated it with annoyance but generally refrained from any public condemnation. It had a point of view, even if not a persuasive one. But the situation changed when representatives of the American Council for Judaism appeared outside the forums of Jewish debate to issue statements to the general press and to testify before congressional committees as a Jewish voice opposed to the settlement of Jewish displaced persons and refugees in a Jewish homeland.

During those critical days, when Jewish lives were in the balance, this went beyond what many felt to be the legitimate bounds of dissent. It was then that the American Council for Judaism fell into disrepute.

My fear is that Breira may be repeating this role. To propagandize within the Jewish community is one thing. Many of us may disagree with Breira, but we will tolerate it. But at the very time that Rabin was coming to Washington to plead for a lessening of the pressures the American President was placing on Israel, Breira placed advertisements in the general press calling on Israel, in effect, to submit to American government pressures and, further, to negotiate with the Palestinians. These advertisements were placed not only in the Jewish press, but in the *New Republic* (June 14, 1975). Since then, spokesmen for Breira have appeared before congressional committees to present similar points of view. . . .

I do not criticize Breira for speaking throughout the American Jewish community, but I do condemn its members for not being concerned that they may indeed undermine the support for Israel in the general community and in the American Congress at a perilous time.

It is also arrogant for those who live in safety, far from the siege and terror, to preach platitudes of peace. It is the Israelis who must bear the consequences of any decision they make, not Breira. They alone have the awesome solitude of sacrifice. Since Israel is an open, democratic society where a wide spectrum of opinions are heard and debated, and where minority political parties function, there is no need for fresh insight and advice from Breira. On the contrary, it is fatuous of Breira to preach from the safety of New York City to Israel on ways of peace.

[Rabbi] JUDEA B. MILLER
Rochester, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . .The eventual disposition of the West Bank and Gaza is not a matter for Israelis or Jews to decide. When there is peace, Arabs will decide what is appropriate for Arabs. Our sole concern should be to insure that whatever entity comes about is not a threat to Israel's security. My own observation of the mood in Israel is that most annexationist sentiments are reactive. Israelis are tired of being pushed around by big mouths who want *them* to take the risk of having Arafat (or whomever the Syrians will replace him with after they get him) sitting . . . in spitting distance of Jerusalem and able to cut off Haifa and the Galilee from the rest of Israel. . . . But Breira chooses to ignore this.

Is it mere chance that the one Zionist supporter of Breira is Hashomer Hatzair, which has a long record of being consistently wrong in every one of its major policies: the primacy of the class struggle over Jewish national interests; a rigid, doctrinaire Marxism; the preeminence of the Soviet Union as "the guiding light to the workers of the world," which they clung to—despite the purges, the trials, the doctors' plot, and the Slansky affair—until the 1967 war? . . .

Finally, may I quote J. L. Talmon's recent article on "The New Anti-Semitism" in the *New Republic:* [S]omehow the Jewish right to live and to exist on a basis of genuine equality, as a right, and not on sufferance *or in return for some special excellence*, is not yet taken for granted as natural and obvious by the world." And evidently, not by Breira.

HAROLD J. WERSHOW
University of Alabama
Birmingham, Alabama

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was pleased to see the excellent article on Breira by Joseph Shattan. It surprised me that the current equivalent of The League Against War and Fascism and similar fronts, which naive people supported in the 1930's, was making as much headway among the so-called elite as Breira has done in the last few years.

SEYMOUR WENNER
Chevy Chase, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Shattan's "Why Breira?" is an excellent and informative essay. As one who was almost

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President Carter on Energy — *(April 20, 1977)*

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duped into joining Breira, I would like to add some observations.

Early in 1976 I was anxious to find an association of persons friendly to Israel but independent of ties to Jewish or Zionist groups. Breira came to my attention, and I was impressed both with its name and its distinguished roster of members. Quite fortuitously, I was invited to hear Breira representatives at the homes of two acquaintances with widely disparate political views. In the "liberal's" home, I detected a discomfiting pro-Arab tilt, whereas in the "conservative's" home, the pitch was quite moderate, and would have seemed inoffensive even to a member of Likud. At the same time, press coverage of Breira was disclosing a more stridently pro-Arab position than I had heard at either meeting. By then the question arose, Who is Breira and what are its real aims?

My suspicions were consolidated in the fall of 1976, when I learned that Samuel Rubin, the financial "angel" of Breira, was actively supporting the Connecticut campaign of Toby Moffett, who makes no secret of his decidedly pro-PLO bias. By then Breira's spokesmen had slyly substituted the PLO for the more general term "Palestinian." Ironically, at about the same time, Irving Howe appeared at the home of some prominent and rich New Yorkers, where his pitch for Breira continued the specious argument that Breira was a pro-Israel group. . . .

RUTH S. KING
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Shattan must be commended. . . . Too many of the recent articles on Breira have been filled with emotional arguments and therefore have failed to make an "academic" point. Mr. Shattan has gone beyond this emotionalism to present an informative and interesting article. It is important for all Jews to understand the nature of Breira and to become familiar with its members and actions, just as they should be familiar with other national Jewish groups. . . .

I have only one question, and that is not for Mr. Shattan alone: where are all of the young Breira followers who are supposedly stalking the campuses? Perhaps they are in other areas of the country. Certainly I have seen little to make me believe that Breira has *any* serious following among Jewish students in the Washington, D.C., area.

DEBORAH NEUFELD
Jewish Student Union
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Breira creates a straw man when it talks about the need for dissent and asserts that it is filling this need by bringing up issues that have been hushed up and not dealt with by the American Jewish community.

It is common knowledge that the issues raised by Breira have been raised again and again, in articles and in Arie Eliav's book, *The Land of the Hart: Israelis, Arabs, the Territories, and a Vision of the Future,* which was translated into English, published by the Jewish Publication Society, and widely distributed in the American Jewish community.

All these ideas are widely known, so it is nonsense for Breira to say it has raised issues no one here has discussed.

It is time that people who have understood Breira dissent from the position Breira is taking. That dissent has already started and should continue, but Breira is attempting to suppress it—and that is the reprehensible act.

Breira has created its straw man in order to cover its policy of activities promoting interests which are harmful to Israel's welfare.

N. SIRKIN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read with unflagging interest Joseph Shattan's "Why Breira?," a detailed and fully documented stripping away from the architects and spokesmen of this strange organization its pretensions to having only the best interests of Israel at heart. . . .

I. KAUFMAN
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Shattan performed a real service to readers of COMMENTARY with his fully-documented and accurate article. I think it is high time for the supporters of Breira, especially the rabbis and Zionists among them, to ask themselves the following question: why doesn't Breira challenge the Arab world . . . for having expelled almost a million Jewish refugees as it now challenges Israel on the Palestinians? The Jewish refugees were forced to leave the countries where they had lived for thousands of years, but were absorbed by the one and only small Jewish state, Israel. . . .

YAAKOV RIZ
Executive Director
Jewish Identity Center
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The article on Breira by Joseph Shattan is of the utmost importance. The entire problem of Breira and its activities is presently being discussed in Jewish circles throughout the United States. This article is notable for the eminent fairness of the author in treating both sides of the issue. Mr. Shattan succeeds in presenting both positions, so that American Jews and others can arrive at conclusions based not upon polemics but upon the facts as they are.

HOWARD L. ADELSON
President
United Zionists-Revisionists
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Shattan's article is quite informative. However, I think he misses the most important point, which was emphasized in the *Jewish Week* articles: namely, that Breira deliberately used and was used by papers like the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post* to create the impression that there had been a real break in American Jewish support of Israel—and that this occurred during the period when Arab power was becoming overwhelming. If Breira simply supported the PLO, it would be just another "radical" organization.

RUTH BARKAN
Long Beach, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Permit to congratulate you on the article on Breira. It is indeed an important and valuable contribution by a very responsible publication. . . . The actions of Breira have been most detrimental in the area of greatest vulnerability, namely on the campuses. . . . As a longtime student of Breira, I recognize the need for a more balanced and even type of presentation on campus, and your article is a major contribution in this direction. . . .

GERD M. STRAUSS
B'nai B'rith
John F. Kennedy Lodge No. 2484
Silver Spring, Maryland

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I have to agree with Arthur Waskow that there is indeed a parallel between the role of Breira today vis-à-vis Israel and the role its founders played during the Vietnam war; however, my viewpoint is diametrically opposed to that of Waskow. As I read then of the antics of those same smug, self-righteous "peaceniks" presumptuously making contact with Vietcong and acting as if they were the shadow government of the United States, I shuddered at the thought that perhaps some day this same . . . group would try to dictate Israeli foreign policy. Unfortunately, I was right. . . .

ISIDORE CROSS
Waterbury, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Joseph Shattan's objective account of Breira, which entirely conforms to my own knowledge of the facts (and greatly enriches it), will be cited, alas, as more evidence of a systematic drive to persecute that organization. . . . For essential to the present policy of Breira is to characterize all criticism, however stated and however factual, as persecution. It then follows that the noble few stand against the mean many, light against darkness. . . .

But as Mr. Shattan shows in his article, Breira's own policy toward critics both inside and outside its inner circle hardly vindicates such self-righteousness or even verifies the claim that the policies of Breira are formulated by open discussion. Breira's policy was—and I think remains—to ignore the criticism and to vilify the critics as McCarthyites. One hardly can lose, if no criticism is taken seriously, and all critics treated contemptuously.

Over the past eighteen months, in letters to Breira officers and executives, I raised various objections to policies, statements, and programs. Not one of these letters was answered. When a local federation official prepared and published a serious criticism of Breira, even arranging to print a reply in the federation newspaper (speaking of suppression of dissent!), Breira found itself uninterested in dialogue. I can cite ample evidence of a policy of crying persecution in the face of legitimate dissent from Breira's position.

I recall, in this context, that about three years ago Breira statements tended to claim that its viewpoint was suppressed and that the organization could not gain a hearing in the Jewish community. I objected at that time that Breira speakers and viewpoints were everywhere, that many of its significant voices were given opportunity (at fine fees) to express their opinions, and that it would be difficult to think of any organization with more extensive access to such Jewish public opinion as exists in this country than Breira itself. That objection, predictably, made no difference.

Yet while I think Breira is pretty much over and done with, having been rendered useless as an instrument of public discourse by its own doing and having been made incredible as a worthy Jewish organization by Rael Jean Isaac's research, we should not forget how Breira's inner group gained a hearing among its outer, and, I think, rather worthy circle. Breira presented itself as a Zionist alternative at the very point when a great many serious Jews, young and old, were wondering whether, within Zionism, they might find an alternative to the policy summarized as "the centrality of Israel" by Israeli Zionist thinkers and institutions. I think Mr. Shattan has understood matters quite well when he refers to the fact that Breira was sought as a Zionist alternative at exactly the time in which messianic and fantastic definitions of "true" and "essential" Zionism were being proclaimed. That Breira's alternative is discredited should not obscure the fact that that to which it was supposed to present an alternative was, and still is, implausible.

JACOB NEUSNER
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island

JOSEPH SHATTAN writes:

I am very grateful to Jacob Neusner, who was with Breira from its early days, serving on both its advisory council and its executive board, for confirming the accuracy of my account of that organization. Although Mr. Neusner's letter is surely vindication enough—indeed, even his characterization of the way Breira responds to criticism is amply documented in many of the letters above—I will nevertheless proceed to answer my critics, if only to set everyone's mind at rest.

Let me first take up three charges which recur in several of the letters critical of my article.

1. My article maligns Barry Rubin. My purpose in citing Mr. Rubin's call—at a conference sponsored by MERIP and held at the Institute for Policy Studies—for a specifically Jewish organization to champion the PLO was neither to malign Mr. Rubin nor to ruin his life, but simply to document that, *already in 1971*, the anti-Israel Left in this country was considering setting up a pro-Palestinian organization *within the Jewish community*. Since two members of the anti-Israel Left of that period, Robert Loeb and John Ruskay, did indeed go on to help found, and then to lead, precisely such an organization, and since the major source of that organization's funding is the Samuel Rubin Foundation which, perhaps not coincidentally, is also the major source of funding for the Institute for Policy Studies, I thought that recalling Barry Rubin's youthful follies would be of more than academic interest. I regret not having indicated that he has since changed his views. But I still think his past activities are relevant to the story of Breira, and it is the story of Breira, not the story of Barry Rubin, I was trying to tell in my article.

2. In reporting on a statement made by Rabbi Joachim Prinz, my article confuses Arthur Samuelson and Arthur Waskow. Here, as Mr. Waskow puts it, I showed a "bias . . . so extreme," a "reckless disregard of the facts so total," and a "dependence on the vituperative Jewish press so great" that I "simply stated a flat falsehood." Even in response to an actual mistake, such language would seem rather excessive. But I made no mistake. Nor did I depend on the press. On January 26, 1977, I spoke to Rabbi Prinz over the telephone. I asked him whether the Arthur he referred to in his letter was Arthur Samuelson or Arthur Waskow. He assured me it was Arthur Waskow.

3. My article relies exclusively on Rael Jean Isaac's "lies." As Benno Weiser Varon points out in his letter, William Novak, in his attempt in *genesis 2* to *refute* Mrs. Isaac's pamphlet, nevertheless admits that her work is carefully done and well-researched. In addition, the fact is that my article contains many significant points of evidence that were unavailable to Mrs. Isaac. (Some of them appear in her reply to Mr. Novak in the April *Outpost*, the publication of Americans for a Safe Israel.)

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Now to individuals.

To Robert Loeb: As the head of an organization which calls for "open discussion" of all the issues in American Jewish life, Mr. Loeb has a curious way of arguing. His principal means of "refuting" my article is to cite an "internal background memorandum on Breira" prepared by two staff members of the American Jewish Committee. "One can only hope," he concludes piously, "that the document will be made public." I suspect Mr. Loeb knows that internal memos are not meant for publication; otherwise, they would not be called "internal." Having read the memo myself, however, I am at a loss to account for Mr. Loeb's sense of vindication. Nowhere does the document actually refute the analysis offered by Mrs. Isaac or myself; what it does do is to take a more benign view of the Breira phenomenon.

When it comes to his own political history, Mr. Loeb stands on his dignity: "As for Mr. Shattan's selective and inaccurate representation of my personal history, I simply refuse to respond to it." So be it. I will simply observe that a person who demanded the cessation of American arms shipments to Israel during the Yom Kippur War, when Israel's survival hung in the balance; who nonetheless calls himself a Zionist; yet who refuses to discuss—let alone repudiate—his previous actions, must surely hold the American Jewish community in the greatest contempt.

Mr. Loeb and others have been very free with accusations against Mrs. Isaac and myself concerning our alleged use of the disreputable technique of guilt by association, but I notice that he himself resorts to it: since Mrs. Isaac's personal sympathies are with Gush Emunim, which is decidedly "hawkish," how can she be "objective" about Breira, which is decidedly "dovish"? Mr. Loeb apparently feels that only "doves" (how about Mr. Neusner?) should be permitted to pass judgment on Breira. I do not agree. As I wrote in my article: "Mrs. Isaac's own sympathies, to judge from other of her published writings, would appear to tend toward the position of the Land of Israel movement, but her pamphlet on Breira is free of any overt bias and is scrupulous in its respect for evidence and in its use of documentation." That is a judgment I stand on.

Finally, there is the matter of Mr. Loeb's statement before the McGovern Committee. Since he chooses to quote it only selectively, let me cite the key passage: "The government of Israel should declare itself ready to negotiate with the PLO, directly, as the representative of the Palestinian people, on all future relations between their two states." Mr. Loeb argues that this position "'resembles very closely the proposal known as the Yariv/Shemtov formula." It does not. Neither Yariv nor Shemtov regards the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, neither has called for the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and in Gaza (Yariv has argued against it), and neither has demanded that Israel negotiate directly with the PLO "on all future relations between their two states." For Mr. Loeb to pretend otherwise is disingenuous, to say the least, and illustrates what Robert A. Riesman, in his letter, calls Breira's "imaginativeness with the facts."

Breira's own position on Israeli-PLO negotiations was clearly spelled out by Rabbi David Saperstein, a member of Breira's executive board, in an interview in the Washington *Star* (February 7, 1976). Responding to the question, "Do you feel that the Israeli government should negotiate with the PLO?," Rabbi Saperstein said:

> I feel that it is to Israel's advantage to clarify precisely what it will offer for an overall peace, and then talk with all Palestine leaders, including the PLO—once the PLO recognizes Israel's right to exist. *Breira, reacting even more strongly to the necessity for Israel to break the diplomatic stalemate, has taken the organizational position to negotiate with all Palestinian leaders with no preconditions.* Such negotiations would prod the emergence of moderate Palestinian positions in and out of the PLO. At present, moderate Palestinian leaders have nothing to gain by disavowing the extremists [emphasis added].

If this is Mr. Loeb's idea of placing the "onus of responsibility on the Arab world," then he does not understand the meaning of the phrase, "onus of responsibility."

To Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf: It was at a MERIP conference that the idea for the organization that became Breira first surfaced. CONAME was *not* committed to a safe Israel—see the telegram it signed opposing U.S. military assistance to Israel during the Yom Kippur War. Mark Bruzonsky *was* a frequent columnist for *interChange*. I did not say that Barry Rubin is currently a supporter of the PLO. I never claimed that MERIP's Sharon Rose came near Breira. I never claimed Rabbi Wolf was enlightened.

To Arthur I. Waskow: Nowhere in his letter does Mr. Waskow address himself to the main points in my article. Does he believe, for example, that his opposition to arms transfers to Israel during the Yom Kippur War is compatible with *ahavat Yisrael*? He does not say. Does he deny that IPS, where he was long a senior fellow, has a consistent history of anti-Israel and pro-PLO activity, and that his most recent "project" there and Breira's "project of concern" are identical? Again, no comment. Does he deny that in his article for the *Nation* lauding Breira he drew an altogether misleading analogy between American "peacemakers" trying to force the hand of their own government and Breira trying to force the hand of a foreign government? Again, Mr. Waskow is silent. It is difficult not to conclude that the "facts" he does cite are in the nature of diversionary tactics, meant to obscure the issue rather than to clarify it. Even so, three points ought to be made:

1. Mr. Waskow claims that he never held seminars for members of Congress under Breira's auspices. Yet in an interview with Phil Bronstein, published in the San Francisco *Jewish Bulletin* on April 9, 1976, Mr. Waskow clearly indicated that he had. The interview states:

> Breira has been holding seminars for members of Congress, as Waskow puts it, "to open new perspectives they hadn't considered. Many of them have been uneasy about the long-range effects of Israeli policy." Waskow feels that this effort does not weaken Jewish community support for Israel. "People went to the Hill to argue against signing the Sinai pact although the Israeli policy was to support it. We think it is the Israeli government's position that is wrong."

2. In his Op-Ed piece in the *Times*, Mr. Waskow claimed that Sabri Jiryis and Isam Sartawi, two officially designated PLO representatives to the United States, stated as fact that the PLO was ready to

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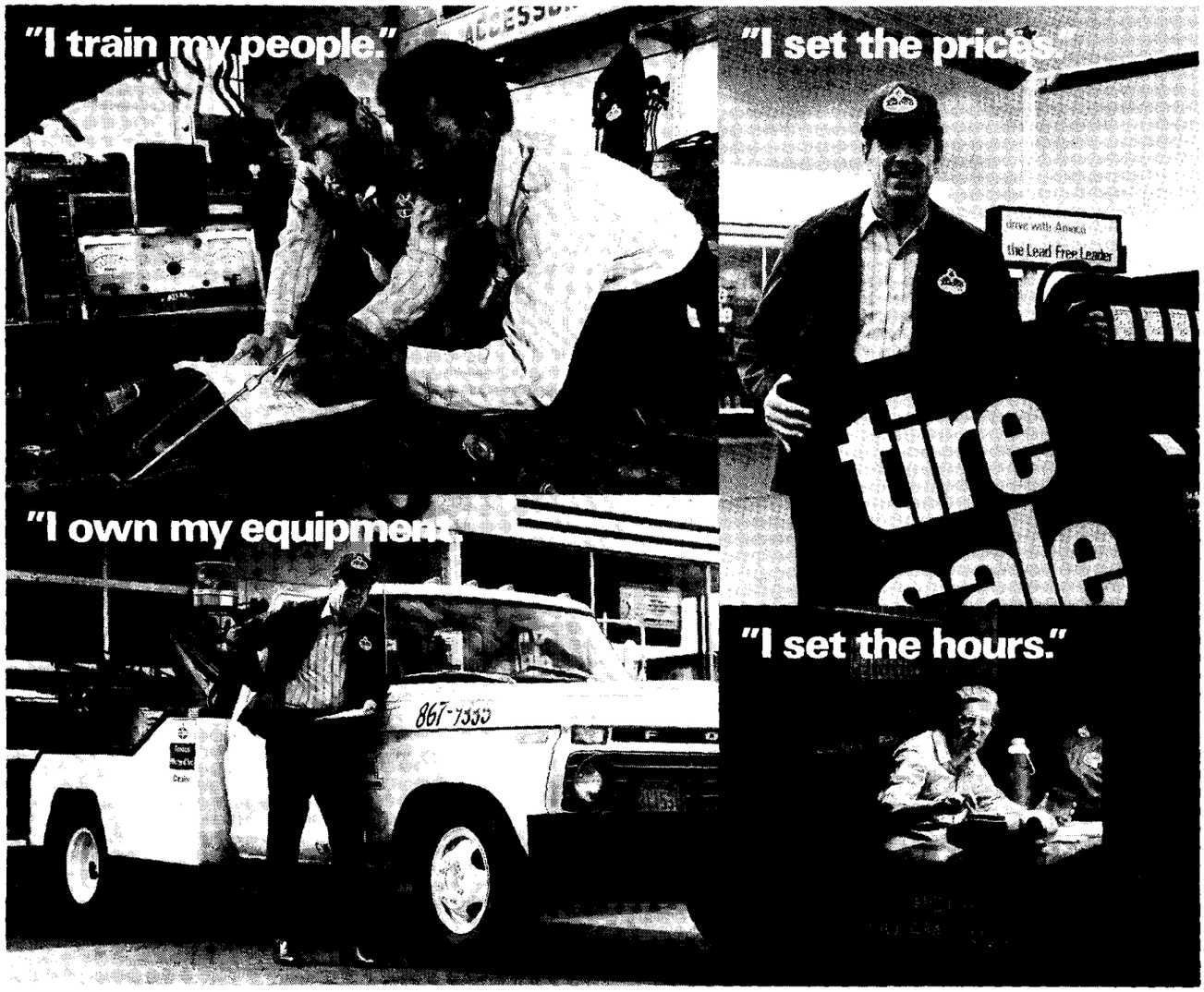

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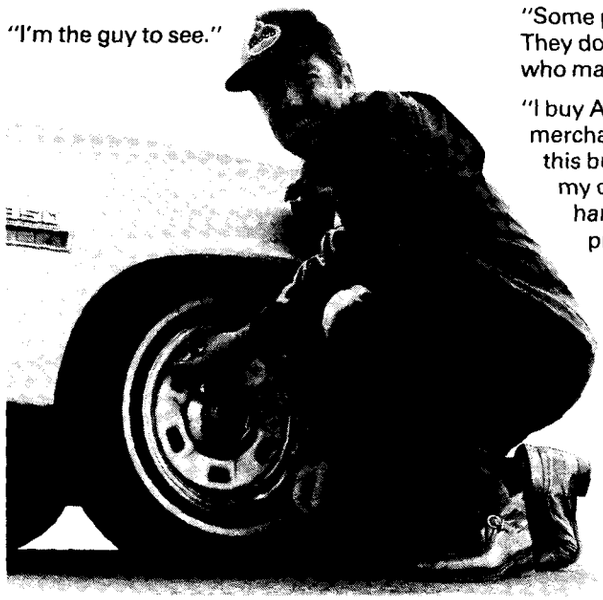

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accept Israel's legitimacy. Subsequently, several Jewish officials who were present with Mr. Waskow categorically denied that Jiryis and Sartawi had said any such thing. Unfortunately, the *Times* did not run their version of the meeting on its Op-Ed page.

3. Arthur Waskow has written many thousands (or is it by now millions?) of words explaining his views. For my sins, I have read most of them, if not indeed all—just as Nathan Glazer advises me to do. Why does Mr. Waskow think it is also necessary to interview him? Has he not made his ideas clear enough on paper?

To Inge Lederer Gibel: Nothing I could write in response to Mrs. Gibel, and her contention that Breira's preoccupation with Israel's many sins derives from a love for that country, could improve upon what Ruth R. Wisse has written in her letter. May I advise Mrs. Gibel to calm down, take a deep breath, and read it. The Jewish "credentials" of the *maskilim* whom Mrs. Wisse cites were, I have no doubt, at least as impressive as Mrs. Gibel's own—which did not prevent them from engaging—"despicably," shall we say?—in activities whose political consequences were strongly inimical to Jewish interests. As to Mrs. Gibel's assertion that "Bob Loeb and John Ruskay left CONAME to found Breira because they couldn't get a hearing for their *Jewish* position in the older organization," that is simply incorrect. When Loeb and Ruskay helped to found Breira, they were *still* members of CONAME, though they chose to keep their dual activity secret.

To Rabbi Marc Saperstein: No, Rabbi Saperstein, "The forces at work in the Arab world," *are* "essentially different from those operating in Israel." It is not the Israelis who for the past thirty years have refused to make peace with or to recognize the Arabs—though admittedly one would not know this simple truth from Breira's pronouncements on the subject.

To David M. Szonyi: Mr. Szonyi seems to have forgotten the remarks of Edward R. F. Sheehan, a featured speaker at Breira's national conference, who denounced Secretary of State Vance's call for the PLO to alter its National Covenant as a "dictat." He apparently does not recall that until the conference, Breira's position was that Israeli-PLO negotiations ought to proceed with *no* preconditions (see the interview with Rabbi David Saperstein cited above). I am a little disappointed in Mr. Szonyi for pretending that I did not notice that Breira has recently muted its preoccupation with the PLO, when, in fact, I specifically said that it had. I am gratified, however, that Mr. Szonyi grants that CONAME's "orientation" was anti-Israel; he should get in touch with Rabbi Wolf, who thinks it was not. But Mr. Szonyi's contention that Loeb and Ruskay left CONAME for Breira because of the former's anti-Israel orientation is a little hard to swallow. In the first place, as I have pointed out above, Loeb and Ruskay remained in CONAME even after helping to start Breira. In the second place, *CONAME endorsed Breira.* Thus, on April 23, 1976, in a letter addressed to ""CONAME Stalwarts" announcing that organization's incorporation into the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Alan Solomonow, CONAME's executive director, wrote: "Now the War Resisters' League, the American Friends Service Committee, the Women's International League for Peace, and Breira all have their own national programs on the Middle East. There could hardly be a better tribute to your own patient support." What CONAME, the WRL, the WILP, the AFSC, and Breira all had in common was their insistence that the PLO be awarded a state in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank, and their demand that Israel be forced to recognize that organization's legitimacy. Robert Loeb, incidentally, is currently on the national interim steering committee of Clergy and Laity Concerned, a CONAME sponsor group which formerly published the infamous anti-Israel *American Report.*

To Eric H. Yoffie: When have Israeli officials *not* stated that they would be willing, *in return for peace,* to give back nearly all the territory occupied during the 1967 war? And how many American Jewish organizations "encourage Israel to be stubborn on the matter of territories"? If Breira's positions "have been basically sound," why have so many of Breira's initial supporters—including Rabbi Joachim Prinz, Rabbi Robert Gordis, Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, Dr. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, and Professor Jacob Neusner—disaffiliated themselves from it? What Jewish organization in the United States, besides Breira, was "jubilant" over Israeli setbacks in the '73 war?

To Arthur A. Cohen: Although William Novak, in his attempt in *genesis 2* to refute Mrs. Isaac's pamphlet, does not mention, let alone quote, the many prominent Jewish figures who were once sympathetic to Breira and who have since left it, he is at least honest enough to admit that Breira consists of Zionists, non-Zionists, and anti-Zionists (all he omits to say is that the anti-Zionists occupy leadership positions in Breira). Mr. Cohen tells us about the Zionists and non-Zionists who form part of Breira's "otherwise conflicting constituencies," but he forgets about the anti-Zionists altogether. He does not, however, forget to call my article "partial" and "tendentious." Having read his letter, I must agree with him when he states that he is not in a position to comment on the facts—though I wonder why he then proceeds to do so anyway. Let me fill him in on just one detail: on May 29, 1974 Breira became a non-profit corporation. Robert Loeb, until then one of Breira's two full-time staffers (the other was John Ruskay, Loeb's colleague from CONAME) became president of Breira, Inc., and Breira's "working committee" became the new corporation's board of directors. Neither Breira's president nor its board of directors was elected by the membership. Indeed, it was not until the end of February 1977, *three-and-a-half years* after Breira was founded, that it held its first election. For Mr. Cohen to call Breira a democratic organization, therefore, is more than a little misleading.

To William Novak: I did not "invent" my own facts, and for Mr. Novak to charge that I did does no credit to whatever reputation he may have for reliability and responsibility. As to his plaintive query, "Who will protect Breira?," Mr. Novak has apparently forgotten that Breira has more than its share of partisans—in the House and Senate and in the editorial offices of the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post.* What Breira stands in need of is not more protection, but a modicum of intellectual honesty.

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To Jack Nusan Porter: The role Breira plays is to help erode American support for Israel, not to serve as an American counterpart to Mapam's left wing. If Mr. Porter thinks I made "some good points," I hope that he and his fellow Breira-members in Boston will pause, before moving "into the educational and political arena," to reconsider their own positions.

To Nathan Glazer: It seems to me that when Zionists make common cause with non-Zionists and anti-Zionists, it is an event worthy of considerable speculation. Such united fronts, after all, do not emerge every day—Arthur Waskow and Nathan Glazer are usually on *opposite* sides of the barricades. Surely it is legitimate, then, to inquire into the motives of liberals and Zionists who find that they are more comfortable in an organization consisting of radicals, non-Zionists, and anti-Zionists than in an organization consisting exclusively of fellow liberals and Zionists. And surely it is not wrong to ask why the sort of "alternative" offered by Breira should strike such a responsive chord among certain Jewish intellectuals just now—now when Israel's political fortunes are at their lowest, when Zionism has been equated with racism, and when the campaign to delegitimize Israel grows in intensity from day to day.

ONE last point. It has been charged that the sort of critique which Mrs. Isaac and I have undertaken is in itself illegitimate, a gross departure from normal standards of scholarship and journalism. Marie Syrkin, in an article for the April *Midstream,* has addressed herself to this question, and I think her considered remarks bear quoting:

> Differences of opinion in regard to a complex issue are no novelty either in the United States or Israel; their expression is part of the democratic process. To impugn the good faith of those who hold a contrary view is self-defeating. However, when an organization [such as Breira] counts among its most vocal and energetic spirits individuals whose opposition to Jewish national independence and long-standing espousal of the PLO program is a matter of record, then questions are in order. . . . That leftists of a certain stripe have been ideologically opposed to a Jewish state is hardly news. They are as free to make their propaganda as is the anti-Zionist Council for Judaism or any pro-Arab outfit on the extreme Right. But to suggest that the declared political allegiances of proponents of a political solution are irrelevant to those who consider the soundness of their recommendations is disquietingly naive. . . .
>
> In our time we have had too much experience with "fronts" not to be wary. . . .

In my article I observed that Breira's emergence is "a vivid demonstration of the inroads made into the American consciousness by the campaign to delegitimize Israel." By overwhelmingly concentrating on what *Israel* has done or failed to do, Breira has contributed to the impression that the obstacle to peace in the Middle East lies in Israel rather than in the Arab world. From this conception of reality it follows inexorably that the road to peace runs through placing pressure on Israel. Thus, whatever certain naive members or supporters of Breira may think, the primary *political* role this organization plays is to add a Jewish voice to the already dangerous movement to place one-sided pressure on Israel.

In addition to citing facts and names, and in addition to delineating the political histories of individuals, I offered a reasoned analysis of the ideas which Breira espouses and a critique of the political purposes which it may be said to serve. None of my critics, *not a single one,* has anything to say about that analysis or that critique. The fact that all they can do is express tremendous fury over three or four alleged inaccuracies (which, as I have shown, are not even inaccuracies at all) is, I submit, both an indication of the impoverished quality of their ideas and evidence of political bad faith.

FINALLY, although I cannot respond to all their points in detail, it is a pleasure to thank Jacob Neusner, Ben Halpern, Ruth R. Wisse, Henry Goldman, Robert A. Riesman, Deborah E. Lipstadt, Benno Weiser Varon, Norma Freedman, Rabbi Judea B. Miller, Harold J. Wershow, Seymour Wenner, Ruth S. King, Deborah Neufeld, N. Sirkin, I. Kaufman, Yaakov Riz, Howard L. Adelson, Ruth Barkan, Gerd M. Strauss, and Isidore Cross.

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Court Decisions

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Elliott Abrams's strong reaction [Letters from Readers, February] to my letter criticizing his comments on *Brown* v. *Board of Education* is a reminder of how one may unthinkingly give offense. He took as personal attack what I had not so intended, at least consciously. I regret my part in reducing to polemics the discussion of what are serious issues. Probably Mr. Abrams and I are not so far apart as all that on some of them, but it is worth trying to clarify the issues.

1. Mr. Abrams speaks of the Court in *Brown* "basing its decisions on social and psychological evidence." The opinion in *Brown* contains a sentence about "psychological knowledge," with citations in a footnote. Whether that was the basis of the opinion seems to me to be subject to a simple test: if the sentence and the footnote were excised, would the remainder of the opinion stand? I think it clearly would. The principal reliance of the Court was on the line of cases rejecting separate higher education for blacks—even in a separate Texas law school that was identical to the white school in all respects save such "intangibles" as reputation. Paul Freund wrote long ago that the higher-education cases pointed inevitably toward the demise of the separate-but-equal doctrine. Mr. Abrams did not mention those decisions in his original review or in his reply, but they are there.

2. Mr. Abrams reacted strongly to my statement that the charge of a "social" basis for *Brown* had been part of the standard racist attacks in the years after the decisions. But that was meant to be only a factual reminder of a sad period of our history that many have forgotten. The Southern Manifesto of 1956, for example, said: "The Supreme Court, with no legal basis for such action, undertook to exercise their naked judicial power and substitute their personal political and social ideas for the established law of the land."

3. Similarly, Mr. Abrams took offense at my comment that, after the Nazis, it took no great learning to understand that racial segregation imposed on a minority was designed to be invidious. Again, the comment did not refer to his views. In fact, it was a paraphrase of a passage from a book of mine published in 1964. Alexander M. Bickel made the same point when he wrote, in *The Least Dangerous Branch* (1962), that segregation by law placed "one of the groups of which our society is constituted in a position of permanent, humiliating inferiority" and fostered among whites "self-damaging and potentially violent feelings of racial superiority—feelings that, as Lincoln knew, find easy transference from Negroes to other groups." Professor Bickel went on: "To determine that segregation establishes a relationship of the inferior to the superior race is to take objective notice of a fact of our national life and of experience elsewhere in the world. . . ."

In short, it took no reference to social or psychological studies to understand, in 1954, that segregating a minority was an expression of contempt. I therefore continue to believe it wrong and dangerous to suggest that the Supreme Court needed "evidence" from the social sciences to reach that conclusion in 1954, or that it in fact rested its judgment on such material.

4. The more recent decisions on busing, prison conditions, and the like raise very different considerations. But it seems to me wise in these cases also to remember some of the terrible realities that confront judges. In the Alabama prison case, for example, the evidence before Judge Frank Johnson included the fact that an inmate in a prison hospital had sores infested with maggots; his bandages were changed only once in the month before he died. When one faces such facts, it is less easy to say that the judge who finds a constitutional violation makes himself, in Mr. Abrams's phrase, a "sociologist-king."

ANTHONY LEWIS
Boston, Massachusetts

ELLIOTT ABRAMS writes:

The differences between Anthony Lewis and me are narrowing, but still exist.

Mr. Lewis makes two arguments: that the Supreme Court did not need "evidence" from the social sciences to decide *Brown*, and that it is "wrong and dangerous" to suggest "that it in fact rested its judgment on such material."

The first of these points was made in my review of Lino Graglia's *Disaster by Decree* [November 1976]. In it, I described the social-science evidence in *Brown* as "gratuitous." I went on to say that the use of such evidence weakened the *Brown* opinion, since it was "highly controversial and in any event beyond the Court's competence to assess," and since its use allowed critics to infer that the Court's legal arguments were weak and needed this extra-legal support. I agreed with Lino Graglia that the Court should straightforwardly have overruled the separate-but-equal doctrine and held that the Constitution simply forbids racial segregation by the government.

If Mr. Lewis understood my views, he would realize that in taking the position he now emphatically restates, he is simply agreeing with me.

On his second point, Mr. Lewis and I do have a disagreement: I say the *Brown* opinion was (needlessly) based on sociological and psychological evidence, while he says it was not. I would leave the argument here if Mr. Lewis did not, once again, display remarkable intolerance for views differing from his. He is willing to state that he did not mean to call my views "racist," but feels constrained to add that they are not only wrong but "dangerous." If Mr. Lewis is abandoning polemics, he might do well to drop the word "dangerous" as a handy description of views which simply oppose his own.

Mr. Lewis concludes with a horror story from Alabama which proves that federal judges are often forced to make socially significant decisions. This is of course true, but my review criticized judicial overreaching, not judicial power *per se*. I agree with Mr. Lewis that the courts should not abdicate their responsibilities, and I hope he will agree with me that these responsibilities are, and in our political system must remain, carefully limited.

[*Additional correspondence on Robert Moss's article, "Anglocommunism?," which was announced for this month, will appear next month.*—ED.]

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O Death, Where Is Thy Sting-a-Ling-a-Ling?

Leslie H. Farber

A WORD about my title—a line from a British soldiers' song, popular in World War I. Clearly it is an irreverent version of a passage from St. Paul, one of the West's early great thanatologists. In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul (adapting a passage from Hosea) writes, "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Perhaps I should quote the entire lyric of the World War I song, so it may be appreciated how little those soldiers cared for St. Paul's solace:

The bells of hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling
For you but not for me,
And the little devils how they sing-a-ling-a-ling
For you but not for me.
O death, where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling?
O grave, thy victoree?
The bells of hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling
For you but not for me.

My own preference is clear. Popular wisdom about finding God in the trenches notwithstanding, the British soldiers in their own mocking way restore the sting to death and victory to the grave. And they do something more: they suggest the impenetrability of the subject and the necessity of some humor to counter man's futile ambitions to pontificate about matters beyond him.

There is a growing conviction today, however, that those ambitions, far from being futile, are honorable—perhaps heroic—and merit our unprejudiced attention and support. I am speaking, of course, of the extraordinary explosion, over roughly the past ten years, of interest in—study of, speaking and writing about—death and dying. This enthusiasm sweeps across professional lines, age boundaries, and personal frontiers of all kinds. Anyone and everyone may—and increasingly large numbers of people apparently must—join the crusade against man's last dread adversary.

Well, perhaps not exactly. It is not so much a crusade *against* death as it is a quest toward it. The aim would seem to be to capture death—to tame it, domesticate it, draw it out of its absolute otherness into the realm of the living, where its mystery will be dispelled by the sweet, resolute counsels of enlightenment, and its significance will be revealed as just another, albeit a crucial, experience in life.

To these ends all manner of enterprises proliferate across the land.* In forward-looking secondary schools—not just in California, either—students encounter a variety of death-oriented courses woven into the social-studies, psychology, anthropology, history, or English curriculum. They may do research on biological warfare, medieval confessional devices, suicide rates in suburbia; make field trips to hospital wards and embalming schools; read Faulkner, Poe, and Shakespeare; and write their own obituaries. Nor is this quite optional. A girl in a Florida high school became depressed and wanted to drop her death course, but was refused permission by her mother. "I can't handle death," the mother explained to the teacher. "My daughter needs to learn how."

Meanwhile, younger siblings of these death students are being introduced to the subject by means of "values-clarification" activities. They draw pictures of what friends or parents would remember about them should they die, or of something they "feel very strongly" about, and would be "willing to give your life" for; they ponder burial and cremation, life after death, and donating their bodies to science; they try out games of multiple choice: I would rather be (a) a hangman, (b) a member of a firing squad, (c) an electrocutioner in a prison; and then after milk and cookies they play fallout shelter: twelve people are trying to get in, there's only room for six, you must decide which, and why.

At the college level, of course, opportunities for serious study abound. I have no doubt you may now major in death through any number of disciplines, and I suppose it's quite possible that death might go interdepartmental and have an academic region all its own. (This has probably already happened. It's an odd feature of the age we live in

LESLIE H. FARBER, a practicing psychoanalyst whose most recent book is *Lying, Despair, Jealousy, Envy, Sex, Suicide, Drugs, and the Good Life*, presented an earlier version of the present piece in a symposium called "Living With Dying" at the University of Texas in Dallas.

* I wish to thank Ellen Wolk for tracking down many of the materials of the new thanatology that were used in preparing this essay.

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that most of the things you think are going to happen any day now have been with us for a while already.)

Once out of school, the student may pursue his interest in death into a variety of professions. If he is a doctor, psychologist, social worker, or the like, he may devote his attentions to the dying, the terminally ill, the aged, and/or the families of any of these. If he is a journalist, he will find editors eagerly responsive to new angles on the subject—or fresh turnings on old angles. If he is a photographer or film-maker, galleries will exhibit, publishers will print, and TV networks will air his pictorial musings on the dying. As a researcher, he will be smiled on by the foundations. As a lecturer, he will pack the halls. In other words, death is now the headliner on the culture and pop-culture circuit.

There are also those who stand to benefit from this outpouring of interest—the old, the incurably diseased of all ages. Here, it seems, where the person is most vulnerable, the enterprise becomes least optional. How many, *in extremis,* could resist these blandishments of attention? The question of what other possibilities of the experience of aging and dying are being violated or obliterated to make room for the consolations of enlightenment is not likely to be pondered—certainly not by the dedicated light-engineers themselves, and not often by the possibly light-exhausted subjects.

We might, at this point, ask some general questions about this burgeoning movement—clearly, however extensive it has already become, it is still a massive growth industry on all fronts. While any movement so large will of course encompass a variety of points of view and considerable divergence of opinion on key issues, nevertheless certain fundamental assumptions may be identified that provide a sense of fellowship and a shared momentum.

What do all these scientists, artists, educators, engineers, philosophers hold in common? First, that death is serious and important; second, that it poses a problem for man; third, that serious and important problems can and should be confronted frontally, so to speak, with every human resource available.

With point one it is difficult to disagree. Point two, the identification of death as a *problem,* with that term's implication of a *solution,* is trickier, more dubious, and leads directly to the simple-mindedness of point three. This idea, that all problems, human and otherwise, must submit to direct assault, is hardly a stranger to the modern temper. It might even be said that this perfectly ordinary notion constitutes the central failure of intelligence in our times. It represents intelligence in the act of doing itself in. The first decision intelligence must make is what to think about, then it must choose a mode of inquiry that does not damage or distort the thing being thought about. Physicists, in particular, seem to be more alert on this point than others, having interested themselves for some time in how the act of investigating alters the thing under investigation.

Social scientists, on the whole, seem never to have given the matter a thought. Occasionally someone will mention the possibility that TV news cameras create as much news as they report. And that's about it. The notion that thinking requires discretion—that big things (truth, love, sex, death) and big ideas (truth, love, sex, death) are as fragile as they are powerful, as subject to mutilation as to clarification—this notion doesn't have a lot of currency. For one thing, it would impose serious restraints on our modern determination to mastery of our world and condition—if not by force, by understanding. There must be no secrets, nothing withheld. No aspect of life or experience shall be closed to the prideful probings of the inflated modern will, which claims unlimited privilege over all of existence. Much of the energy of this will goes into exploring and dispelling the ineffable human mysteries—whose dark presence has always been a reminder to man of his majesty as well as his limitations—in the mistaken conceit that everything human will, and should, yield its secrets if exposed to the proper illumination.

Consider, for example, sex, whose emancipation from traditional meaning and constraint is one of the great success stories of our time.

Sex is both an act and a gesture. As a gesture, it is the mightiest symbol we ever had for the mystery of human relation. That is, it *was*—before the sexologists hauled it out of its protective darkness and into the laboratory spotlight, where they worked it over with calipers and litmus paper and rubber gloves. If Masters and Johnson had been better students of Goethe, all this might have been avoided. Goethe long ago warned us on this point. As Erich Heller puts it: "His [Goethe's] science, like his poetry, is founded on the conviction—self-evident to him—that man, if only he exercises *all* his faculties of understanding, is, as he says, 'adequately equipped' to know what he is meant to know about life, without having to put 'nature on the rack'; for there, he says, she remains silent." (I suppose we must stop charging it all up to Masters and Johnson, as though they actually made the mountain they have so boldly scaled in the service of science and the good life. Procedures they invented, yes; they devised new gear. But the path was laid out before them. They had only to seize the *Zeitgeist* by the throat and make their mad dash for the summit.) In any case, sex, too, is now silent on the rack. But with all the click-clack of instruments, and the hum of a busy lab, no one has noticed that.

Now it is death's turn to be hounded out of the shadows and into—not the laboratory but the living room, where it will settle in as a familiar presence, embodied, perhaps, by a dying friend or

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relative, and invoked by regular family discussion. The procedures used to demystify death will differ somewhat from those applied to sex, of course. But there is a common motive behind both enterprises —to bring these vast "problems" under the control of the will.

IT IS generally recognized, of course, that death itself cannot be counted on to respond to such maneuvers, and so the will focuses instead on two related areas: dying and the fear of death.

About dying I will have more to say shortly. The fear of death is a prominent issue in this new movement. The most concentrated and simple-minded effort to give ontological distinction to the fear of death is Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death*, which received the Pulitzer Prize in 1974. Character formation, schizophrenia, depression, neurosis are all seen as creative efforts to contend with mortality "gone astray." Since the advent of psychoanalysis as a science, in which Freud overruled the traditional prime mover—which was, of course, the individual will—every new school of psychology has had to smuggle in a substitute for the will. Freud's own prime mover was libido, Jung's the racial unconscious, Harry Stack Sullivan's anxiety; other doctrines have stressed aggression, dependence, power, sado-masochism, inferiority, and so on. Now comes Becker with the "fear of death"—and it functions in exactly the same way, and shares with these other substitutes for responsible individual will the reduction of thought and action to unconscious motive. Becker sees the fear of death as the molder of character; he sees all inspirations, ambitions, and enterprises as efforts to refute death's imperative. Not everyone would follow Becker to this bitter end, but most practitioners of the new thanatology in all its forms appear to believe that the fear of death is a central concern in the course and conduct of our lives.

For myself, I am not so sure. I do not doubt that it is present from time to time. Certainly during life-threatening illnesses and disabilities. And, I believe with Martin Buber, when one is in the grip of guilt. "Here," says Buber, "there rules the one penetrating insight—the one insight capable of penetrating into the impossibility of recovering the original point of departure and the irreparability of what has been done, and that means the real insight into the irreversibility of lived time, a fact that shows itself unmistakably in the starkest of all human perspectives, that concerning one's own death. From no standpoint is time so perceived as a torrent as from the vision of the self in guilt."

In addition, I think death may be feared occasionally in maturity when life seems to have been unlived, when death would be seen as premature.

Presumably, and according to received current doctrine, the threat of death in the form of a seriously disabling illness should seriously alter one's life. In an article in the New York *Times*, the late psychologist, Abraham Maslow, following a heart attack, referred to his life thereafter as his "post-mortem life." "Everything," he wrote, "gets doubly precious. You get stabbed by the very act of living, of walking and breathing and eating and having friends. Every single moment of every day is transformed." I knew Dr. Maslow slightly, and my memory of our few conversations is that he was easily given to such operatic overstatements. I recall a similar rhapsody of his over my wife's pregnancy and the excitement of childbirth that lay ahead for her. Let us remember, after all, he was the person responsible for such expressions as "self-actualization" and "peak moments." I am suggesting that far from being "transformed" by his coronary attack, he instead assimilated that harsh event to fit his customary hyperbolic style.

My own first brush with possibly terminal illness was during medical school when a mole that was removed from my leg was diagnosed as melanoma. I will omit the medical details of exploration and diagnosis because they do not bear on the issue. Suffice it to say that I was convinced by all concerned that my chances of survival were, at best, problematical. I recall keenly my realization that my situation was very possibly tragic. I looked at myself in the mirror and thought, "My God, you're too young to die!" And crossing to the window, "If you have only a brief time left, shouldn't you squeeze every drop from the life remaining to you?" Embarrassed by my address to myself in the second person, even after turning away from the mirror, I sought a more dignified way of contending with this poignant moment. Now in the first person, I thought, "Why should I go on with medical school, when I have little chance of surviving to practice as a doctor? There must be another way for me to heighten my remaining time on this earth." Travel? (No money.) Disappear? (No money.) Write a novel? (Too hard, might as well go to medical school.) Nothing both dramatic and feasible occurred to me. Meanwhile the days went by and I continued to attend my classes—if only because I couldn't think of anything better to do. It became increasingly difficult to focus on my tragedy because my studies required a degree of concentration that didn't seem to allow for the kind of posturing I thought fitting. Occasionally when fellow students talked of narrow escapes, I would trot out my own story, which for a while easily took the prize in such competitions. By the time the insurance companies decided I had re-earned my right to be a proper risk, I had worn my confession out, or it had worn me out.

My second brush with death was more recent. That posturing of my youth still remains a possibility. There are times when I am struck once again by the thought that I may fall dead at any moment—even now. And I think of my family, whom I do not wish to leave behind. What hap-

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pens to these sorrowful reveries? I don't know. I suppose they give way to the exigencies and claims of my ongoing life, so that, as in my youth, I continue, one might say, to attend my classes. There are other times when, I must confess, what I want most is to leave my family behind. Death then seems like a vacation.

I HAVE mentioned these encounters with the image of my own death to suggest that each of us will have something specific, personal, and unique to say about the fear of death. Life serves up different conditions and lays different claims on all of us in every way—why should this not be true as well of our relation to our own death? Some people appear to be death-haunted throughout their lives—sometimes by circumstance, sometimes by inner necessity, sometimes by choice. Others seem to be, again for varying reasons, relatively untouched by a concern with death. For still others—for most of us, I would guess—images of death come and go as the outer or inner weather determines, and we make of them what we will, and we deal with them as we can. Who is to say that these various—and fluid—responses to the shifting issue and image of death are not, by and large, appropriate? Who is to say that there is not perhaps some wisdom in the unwilled waxing and waning of interest in—or fear of—death, experienced in the course of life by most of us? The new thanatologists, that's who. They are busy calling us to order across the land, exhorting us to put aside our timidity, to rise up from our indolence and get down to the business of doing business with death.

What is it that they want from us? Or, we may ask, what is it they want to do for us? Their aim would appear to be twofold. First, they hope to familiarize us with death so that we may contemplate and, when the time comes, face our own deaths and those of our loved ones with acceptance and calm. Two obvious assumptions operate here: one, we are all destructively afraid of death (that is, we all *need* to be cured of the fear of death); and two, we *can be cured* (that is, death need not be frightening). I'm sure it will come as no surprise if I say that both these assumptions—in the broad diagnostic and prescriptive way they are embraced—strike me as questionable.

The second aim of the death counselors concerns the appreciation of life. In order that we may value our precious gift of life more intensely, they urge us to focus on it from the perspective of death. Again, I think there is something questionable about this project; I suspect that the kind of enhancement of the present moment that is produced by this eerie back-lighting is not without its hazards. Every moment doubly precious? Not a few just singly precious? And some not so precious? And none at all pure dross? I fear this sort of enhancement works at the expense of discrimination, and in the absence of discrimination experience is flattened—the high intensity level merely renders this flattening more grotesque—and is, thus, inflated and reduced at the same time.

Life, in full ordinariness, provides a rich variety of conditions and occasions for questions of meaning to arise. The meanings that reveal themselves in response to this sort of questioning will be particular and specific. They will emerge out of the immediate ground of living and will in turn nourish that ground. A death perspective, with its wholesale poignancy, cherishing everything temporal, therefore cherishing everything, will swallow up these meanings in an all-purpose "significance" which, valuing everything, cheapens all.

The issue of death also serves a rhetorical function which is not without its attractions both to the theorist and to the person absorbed by the question. For the theorist to invoke death is to announce that he is talking about serious and profound matters. What could be more serious than death? The subject carries more weight than the notion that all is vanity. Similarly for me. If I fall to brooding about my finitude as a mortal, in a mood of apprehension or despondency, I am resorting to an overblown, even hysterical, device for evading the claims of this moment in favor of the claims of eternity. My participation in the moment may require some examination of my duties or my limitations, some act or gesture of a particular, specific nature; my participation in eternity requires merely that I die, and my awe in the face of that injunction can, if I choose to be overwhelmed by it, quite drive out of mind my immediate responsibilities—as writer, psychologist, mate, parent.

In an article in the University of Chicago *Magazine* (Spring 1976), entitled "Courage, Creativity, and Enhancement of Life" and subtitled "Development Value of Fear of Death," Professor Salvatore R. Maddi states that injury and illness are not the only opportunities life affords to come to terms with death. There are milder events which "constitute confrontations with death, if properly understood." For example, "Whenever something ends that you did not want to end (e.g., someone stops loving you while you still love them), or whenever you are overwhelmed by the insufficiency of time and energy to do all you sincerely wish to do, . . . or whenever events are monotonous. . . ." The experience "that things are beyond one's control" or "whenever your conventional values are contradicted by events, . . . when virtue is not rewarded (e.g., a valued colleague who has made a sincere commitment to teaching does not receive tenure), when a situation turns out not to be what it seemed (e.g., it becomes apparent that you are loved for your money, not your personality) [drop dead, Rockefellers])," even when "a President acts in an un-American fashion"—all these are "small confrontations with death." In other words, frustration of one's will, disappointment, failure. Professor Maddi summarizes:

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It is important to recognize that unwanted endings, insufficiency of time and energy, monotony, and disproved ideals, though milder than the direct physical threat of death, are similar to it in demonstrating the real fact of our limited control over events, and the naiveté of the conventional values we are all educated to and fall into so easily. In this, such events are legitimate reminders of physical death because they directly threaten psychological death, that chronic state of meaninglessness and powerlessness that I have elsewhere called existential sickness.

His conclusion is not the modest one that one learns from failure. Rather it is that in order to learn from failure one must confront death, if not actually, then metaphorically. The end is a happy one: " . . . frequent experience of small (and for that matter actual) threats of death can have positive developmental value. . . . The person will perceive life as challenging, and find his satisfaction in being equal to the task. . . ."

To some extent, the problem is one of language. Note that terms like loss of control, monotony, powerlessness, even meaninglessness, express varying types of discomfort belonging to life—as if anything short of the full life, whatever that may be, is not merely a reminder of the limitations of mortality, but a "small confrontation with death."

A problem of language? What is served by calling all manner of unhappiness a "confrontation with death"? On the one hand, unhappiness of whatever nature is inflated by such metaphorical shoddiness into the ultimate infringement of life —namely death itself. On the other hand, such inflated rhetoric quite obscures the specific misfortune with its particular measure of guilt, responsibility, and so on. Thus, again, "death" both inflates and reduces.

WHILE I have been chiding the theorists and practitioners in this new field of thanatology for insisting on an immersion in the subject of death that seems to me of doubtful merit, I wish also to point out that this movement—for all that it owes to the blasphemies and excesses of the modern will—did not spring uncaused upon the cultural scene. Surely it was inspired by a situation—particularly, if not exclusively, in America—in which death had been ruled out of existence. The dying were isolated in terminal wards in hospitals, doctors and nurses lied to them; many of them no doubt were (as David Hendin, in his book, *Death as a Fact of Life*, claims) brutalized by the insistent implorings of their families that they recover; and survivors were surely crippled in their efforts to deal with their grief and loss by their refusal to foresee and face the reality of death. Once death occurred, the morticians took over, and bodies were got up in fancy dress to resemble peaceful sleepers for the funeral. In effect, dying was denied to the dying, and death to the dead.

Jessica Mitford was one of the first to sound the alarm in response to these absurdities. In *The American Way of Death*, published in 1963, she focused on the aesthetic and economic grip the morticians held on death. For extravagant prices the funeral home offered a small-scale production of last rites: casket, music, limousines, and artful embalming which, with the help of cosmetics, putty, etc., offered a "lifelike" representation of the deceased. For the moment of the funeral the ravages of decay were disguised, so that the bereaved relatives and friends could see that death was merely a form of sleep in which the dead relative slid painlessly into a different kingdom, with no trace of decomposition to disturb the illusion.

A few years ago I passed by my father's casket, opened for the mourners, and looked briefly at a peculiar dummy I knew was meant to be my father. However splendid the morticians's art may have been, the illusion of life did not capture me. Instead I glimpsed—as briefly as possible—a cadavar painted up to resemble the man I had known. The effect was more macabre than that of the shrunken, bloated cadavar I dissected in medical school. After the services, as my mother and I were walking away, a special hoisting machine began to lift the casket and lower it into the grave. Glancing back at this operation, I saw that the casket was slipping off the machine, the lid falling open. My glance cannot have lasted more then a few seconds, yet the whole scene appeared to me in slow motion: the casket plunging into the grave and my father's poor prettified mummy falling out of its enclosure so that it landed on its head, the neck twisting awry. A glance was enough; I knew the crew would have no trouble stuffing the remains back into the box. I may have underestimated my mother, but I thought she could do without this vision, so I quickly engaged her in conversation about who would share our limousine until we had put the scene well behind us. No doubt the funeral director was chagrined at this collapse of his enterprise, but he offered no rebate. Nor did I ask for one. Obviously the memory has remained with me—more for certain cinematic features than for any enlightenment on the death of my father. Similarly, the memory of that rouged creature stays with me, but it stays separate from my memories of his life and death.

He died quickly of a heart attack at a ripe old age. Had he died, as my younger brother did, a lingering death, his pain and our pain would have been prolonged, but I do not know that our talk and ruminations in the manner now prescribed would have left us any wiser. Although his death was only a few years ago, it still occurred in the days before our new death doctrines had taken hold. Now that hardly a week goes by that I am not exposed to a new publication from the field of thanatology, I wonder how it would have been today, particularly if this dying had been protracted. Would he have been visited by the staff psychiatrist, fresh from a special course in counsel-

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ing the dying, and urged to join a group for terminal patients, and would the family have been advised of a group for the relatives of the dying? Would we all have been supplied with the standard texts in the field, and given special "hot-line" phone numbers to use in case difficulties arose? Would his grandchildren, fresh from their values-clarification projects and high-school seminars, have come to the bedside full of stimulating questions? Perhaps one of them might have done a special project just on him—a live one in the bag, so to speak.

Becoming an American had demanded so many adjustments for him, some painful, against the grain, so that his life in Russia became more difficult to recapture. And now at the end there would be further instructions about the stages he was to go through as he died. He would, I imagine, have raised no noisy opposition to this final phase of his Americanization. Would he have been scolded for his docility, for his failure to go through Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's celebrated stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and, finally, acceptance, or would one of the young thanatologists have argued for his maturity in so quickly accepting his fate? I think, regardless of how bizarre all this might have sounded to him, he would have liked being told he was a good patient, if that was how he understood the young man congratulating him on achieving acceptance so readily. I doubt that he would have made much of Kübler-Ross's pronouncement: "The stages of dying are not really about dying but the way we come to grips with the crisis of loss, any loss—you cannot possibly be afraid." At this, I imagine, he would have figuratively shrugged his shoulders and wondered why he shouldn't be afraid of death—if not death, what? Clearly, there was no end to the difficulties of becoming an American. Perhaps he would have contrasted his state with that of his son, who went out in a towering rage, and I think he might have envied the vigor of his son's departure.

We both know and do not know that we will die. We believe that we will and we believe that we won't. Both these beliefs are true, for each belongs to a separate mode of consciousness.

On the one hand, we can hardly withhold our assent to the general truth of Socrates' proposition: all men are mortal, I am a man, therefore I am mortal. If you ask me whether I shall die someday, I will answer, Indeed I shall, possibly even someday soon, though of course I hope not. I answer thus because, in addition to being mortal, I am also rational, even, on occasion, reasonable, and I can figure out the syllogisms on the wall as well as the next man. In this sense I "know" I will die, and this "knowledge" is always available to my consciousness, though it is certainly not always present. Your question will invoke it, so may a passage in a book, an unexpected turn of experience, a visiting memory. My acknowledgment of this "knowledge" may be perfunctory and detached, or it may be accompanied by any of a variety of feelings—dismay, terror, rage, awe, grief, calm. I must admit this "knowledge" into consciousness whenever something causes me to raise my head above the present moment, so to speak, to conceive of the interpenetration of my life and time as a linear event, beginning at my birth, threading through my successive days and years, ending at my death, an image of which I must, in this moment, include in my vision of my life. To some degree this vision, with its harsh imperatives, removes me from the present moment—or drains some of the present out of me. It may, of course, feed back into the present a poignancy, a condition of urgency it previously lacked. This is the famous "enhancement of life" that a cultivation of awareness of death does indeed provide—but not, as we have seen, without penalty.

On the other hand, there is much experience of the present in which my "knowledge" of death plays little or no part. This experience has to do with my acceptance of a cyclical principle operating in my life. Evidence abounds. My body belongs to nature and participates in its recurring rhythms. Days arrive one after another, and to some degree routine repeats itself. Weeks, months, years unfold in this manner. Changes occur, with their indications of development or decay; some projects prosper, some falter. But the images and reminders of renewal and repetition that constitute a natural portion of my awareness tend to persuade me that fatigue will yield to rest, and darkness—of day or spirit—to light; they persuade me that I am a creature who obeys the seasonal principle on a multitude of levels, that I am a renewing and enduring being.

I am not suggesting that this "knowledge" of endurance stands as a contradiction to my other "knowledge"—of my mortality. In the light of the latter, all my seasonal comings and goings fall into place on the birth-death continuum, and all directions in my life fold into a single arrow pointing to the end. But with this "knowledge" of mortality in abeyance, the other truth emerges: my life has been full of directions, they have led to and away from a variety of places, they have not—as I experienced them—all been pointing along the one line that points to death. From one point of view my life is a single vector in time, but that is not the point of view which informs most of my experience of it. My ordinary pursuit of the present does not constitute an orderly march down the corridor of past-future; it is more like a rummaging in time, to light—or lighten—the one ever-changing moment that is always in part, where I am. It is in this—mood, if you will, that I understand not that death has no claim on me, but that its claim is limited. If death is the great Other, which will fall across my life and extinguish it when it will, then my life is Other to that Other,

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and knows it not. My life will yield to death, but is not aimed at it.

Of course, if this is all I know about death, I am at best a fool, at worst a menace to myself and others. If I begin to believe that because there is truth in forgetting about death, then there is no death, my life is in some trouble. As David T. Bazelon has said, "Death means the score is real." If I succeed in forgetting about death to the point where the score appears unreal—something we all do from time to time—my life will become a shallow, trivial undertaking. On the other hand, if I refuse to forget death for a moment, if I insist on playing the whole game right under the big shadow, the score will be at least inflated—which is another version of the unreal.

I have said that we both believe and do not believe that we are going to die, and that both beliefs are true. Not only are they both true, they are both necessary. They move around each other freely in our minds, now far apart, now nearly touching. Thanks to the freedom of this give-and-take, thanks to our trust in both truths, the moment we are in—which is all we are ever in—is not imprisoned in the present, nor is it imprisoned in eternity. It remains open and responsive to whatever depth and complexity of meaning we, in our deep and complicated humanness, are able to discover—or provide.

AMONG THE believers and practitioners of the new thanatology, there is a ready and vigorous contempt for the vulgar aesthetic maneuvers of the embalmers and cosmeticians and directors of Forest Lawn—maneuvers whose great popularity of some years ago is certainly diminished but still not extinguished today. While much of this prettifying—whose motive is disguise—was and is indeed offensive, it is interesting that these crusaders, satisfied, apparently, that the ethical credentials of their own enterprise are beyond dispute, are so insensitive to any taint of aestheticism within their own ranks. Perhaps the deliberate unmasking of death has produced the clarity of meaning they thought it would, however, for it is clear that refuge is again being sought in the aesthetic mode. Nothing like the crude rouging of the recent past, of course. But the aesthetic mode has many faces—not all of them pretty.

Take, for example, the recently published—and widely celebrated—book, *Gramp*,* a tape and photograph chronicle of the deterioration and dying of an old Pennsylvania coal miner who, in his seventy-eighth year, afflicted with progressive arteriosclerosis of the brain, began his tormented descent into death. It took three years. At the onset, which was gradual, his family decided he must not be packed away to a nursing home or hospital; he would be allowed "to die in his own way," cared for by his loved ones, at home. What began with occasional disorientation and bizarre behavior soon progressed to tantrums, paranoia, incontinence. As his senility worsened, the family, four generations of it, moved into their grandparents' house, and everyone took turns shaving, dressing, feeding, diapering—and photographing—the old man. And holding his hand, which he required almost all the time. Every night he wrecked his room; he hid all the doorknobs, light bulbs, took apart the stove; he washed his hands in the toilet, blew his nose on his daughter's panties, dropped live cigar butts in his wife's dresser drawers. Under these circumstances, who can be surprised to learn that when he wore two pairs of pants, one inside out, or dressed in his wife's red velvet housecoat with a baseball cap on his head, or said, "Come to me with a cap in your can and a devil double whatchacall with a horse in your hands," or addressed his grandson Richard with, "You're a Richard? What's a Richard?," or said to his grandson, Dan, "Let's get out of here. We're about to be conquered by the women of the season"—who can be surprised that the family came to believe that he was expressing himself in a wonderful new language, full of profound, if private, imagery? The two grandsons who supplied the text and photographs for *Gramp* looked upon him as a "kind of guru," a deranged poet, and they captured on paper and tape his addled utterances as eagerly as they preserved on film his physical degradation. They wanted to give him "a multimedia funeral: large blowups of his face, recorded voices, music, no coffin." In fact, they did not; Gramp's widow took things into her own hands at that point, and in the end Gramp received a traditional burial.

It seems that once the pact was made that Gramp should "die in his own way" at home, there was no end to the temptations, egocentric and aesthetic, that would assail them. Imagine—when he became incontinent and had to be diapered as though an infant, one of the family stretched him out on his back with no sheet to cover his nakedness and another one took a fine photograph of Gramp in his full ignominy. What they wished to save him from was all those needles and tubes he would have suffered in a hospital. "Let him die in his own way!" they kept saying, but that seemed hard to do. For medical apparatus they substituted the paraphernalia of the media—but for their own survival, not his.

LET ME make it clear: I do not entirely censure these people. Meaninglessness is probably the most ultimately unendurable of the trials to which life may subject us. We strive to hold that horror at bay with any means at our disposal. Small wonder that the most available means seems to be a recourse to the aesthetic mode, where meaning is discovered in the surfaces and appearances of things, for it is those very surfaces and appearances that become so dense, so

* By Mark and Dan Jury, Grossman, 152 pp., $5.95.

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overwhelming, when other forms of meaning have been drained out of them.

What was this family to make of the transformation of a beloved and benign grandfather, father, husband into a crazed and incontinent tyrant who —it must at times have seemed—was never going to release his ghastly grip on his people? One wonders if, in an unguarded moment of distress, one family member might have blurted out to another, "Good God, what are we doing? This old man is eating us alive!" Probably not. If that thought did flash through someone's mind, he kept it to himself and reached for a camera (and his publisher's contract).

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, who may be regarded as the high priestess of the new thanatology, embraces the aesthetic mode somewhat differently. She has come to believe, in the course of her work with dying patients, that death is merely an ecstatic transition to another form of life. Her evidence is the testimony of people who have "recovered" from death—with very reassuring news. She says: "They describe a feeling of peace, beautiful, indescribable peace, no pain, no anxiety. And they were perfect—completely whole"—tumors removed, mangled limbs repaired, all disease gone. Perhaps those who found death disagreeable have not yet come forward to tell their stories; it does appear, however, that many people who have almost died have experienced similar sensations of joy, peace, and physical renewal. These sensations are referred to—somewhat sloppily, it seems to me —as "out-of-body" experiences, and they are all the rage. If you have had a brush with death and had some sort of vision in the process, you can count on the interested—not to say credulous—attention of any number of researchers, investigators, scientists, and philosophers. Not all of them will claim, of course, that your account is hard evidence of life after death, some will insist on keeping an open mind.

Dr. Kübler-Ross has no doubts on this point. For her, the end of the body is not the end of life. (I must say that this smacks to me of an attempt to smuggle St. Paul's consolation back into the picture—without any religious sanction such as God, or Christ. In this it resembles other so-called religious impulses that exclude religious content and turn grotesquely aesthetic.) Moreover, the passage from life to life after death is not accomplished alone. Dr. Kübler-Ross explains: "Whomever you most loved in life who preceded you in death is there to help you make the transition. . . . It is wonderful to be able to reassure parents of dying children: 'Don't worry. There will be someone waiting to take care of your child.' " She has said that the accounts near-death patients give make death sound so beautiful that she has feared that publicizing them would encourage suicides. Asked if her conclusion that there is life after death has changed her, she declared: "If I were to lose this house and everything in it, I virtually couldn't care less. Now, because of my work with dying patients, I know that to see a sunset or watch a pheasant family on the lawn are infinitely more important things."

Some years ago, as a result of a coal-mine cave-in, men were trapped underground for long terrible periods; several of them reported, when they were finally rescued, having seen dazzling, jeweled staircases and white robed figures bathed in radiance at moments during their ordeal. In one case two men experienced such visions together, and agreed upon the details. Of course, this was a while ago, and perhaps we were less literal-minded than we seem to be today, but no one took these reports to mean that there might actually be, in addition to coal, celestial staircases under the ground in Pennsylvania.

As for those "out-of-body" experiences, they are interesting, I suppose, for what they suggest about man's capacity to console himself in dire circumstances not by imagining what is—that is an enterprise for calmer times—but what isn't.

WHEN HER now teen-age children were younger, in order that they might learn not to fear death, Dr. Kübler-Ross embarked on a project both oddly like and unlike the story of Gramp, sharing with it, however, some quality of aesthetic inspiration. She brought a terminal case, a stranger named Angelo, home with her—not to dinner, but to die. Unlike Gramp, this man was connected by no prior bonds of love or affection to her household; he was a token dier, prized for his testimony—a laboratory specimen for the instruction of her family.

We do not know many details about his demise. We do know that he was given two months to live, and lived two years. Whether that constituted any wearing out of his welcome in the Kübler-Ross house, we can only guess. After all, he was not Tolstoy; I doubt that, as death drew near, he had much to say about his memories, his perceptions. Nor was he, probably, Ivan Ilyitch, focusing on a moral dilemma of misspent life and relation. Nor was he, I'm sure, Gramp—prancing about naked, shredding the bedclothes, dropping live cigars into Elisabeth's lingerie.

How did he actually die? We don't know. But consider: the children were quite little. Since the educational aim here was to render death simple and unterrifying, raving and screaming would not have been in everyone's best interests. If Uncle Angelo, as he came to be called, took to undue demonstration—of pain or fear—as the end approached, drugs could have tempered his terminal writhings. If his physical deterioration became burdensome, no doubt attendants could have been called in to help. (In this case, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross could be said to be reinventing the hospital.)

But let us suppose the family managed by themselves, sitting with Uncle Angelo, holding his hand, murmuring affectionate reassurances until

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it was all over. Perhaps they all helped press his eyelids down, waiting for the undertaker to arrive. Some minimal relation did, presumably, develop between this old man and the children, for when the time came to purchase his casket they exclaimed, "It's the last time we can go shopping for Uncle Angelo!"—a remark not likely to enter the Bartlett Book of Quotations under the heading of Death.

Not surprisingly, Dr. Kübler-Ross's own evaluation of her enterprise was, "His death was one of the most beautiful experiences for my children." My question to her would be: what did they learn? That dying can be civilized and untraumatic (particularly if undergone by a quasi-stranger with obviously limited emotional ties to the family)? No doubt they did find out something about the physical and mental details of the dying body. But has any mystery about death and dying been solved by this inspection? After all, thousands upon thousands of nurses and interns and medical students have been exposed to such details without learning more than the age-old lesson of mortality, realistically rendered as in a photograph. But beyond that, what? Would these objective details have anything to do with your dying or my dying? No doubt you and I would both succumb to examining the inventory of physical details of deterioration, but such ruminations would interfere, I believe, with the contemplation of death. It is like asking about the relation between the physiological details of *an* orgasm and your or my orgasm. One of the ironies of Masters and Johnson's sex research was that there was no scientific way to distinguish between an orgasm produced by masturbation and one produced by sexual coupling. And therefore, any such distinction was unscientific, and relegated to other realms—such as the "subjective" or the "emotional." Now something similar seems to be happening with dying too, so long as we view our end as the inventory of physical details. Doesn't such cataloguing promote further cataloguing, until finally we want to see the ultimate and objective happening that is orgasm or death itself? What part does voyeurism play in this observation? Is the fashion for sado-masochistic sexual practices related to the impulse to tinker with, even manipulate, the end of life? In other words, will the spasms of death instead of sex become our new pornography? As with sex, we risk knowing more and more about less and less, but all the while our will remains insatiable.

Among the practitioners of the new thanatology there is an air of satisfaction and a good deal of mutual congratulation. It appears to be agreed that the project is not merely worthy, it is also a success. The march up the mountain has resulted in the capture of death, and that once wild, dread creature is now stabled in our midst, not a beloved family member, exactly, but a familiar, accepted presence.

For myself, I don't think death has been brought down from the mountain. I can hear it howling up there on some dark nights, just as all men everywhere have heard it. And as for this cartoon creature we presumably now have tethered in back of the house, where we tend it and talk to it and let it into the parlor on special occasions, it is just a dummy, a death-dummy; and if that sound you hear from the mountain top is not howling, it is laughter. For what would know better than death that the way to deal with man's presumptuous challenges is to reduce him not to silence but to silliness?

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Churchill and Us

Edward N. Luttwak

On December 5, 1938, in the fifth year of his preachings for an accelerated British rearmament, Winston Churchill rose yet again in the House of Commons to berate the government, this time for laxity in preparing London's anti-aircraft defenses. Harold Nicolson was present as Churchill argued with Neville Chamberlain's talented Secretary of State for War, Leslie Hore-Belisha:

> Winston starts brilliantly and we are all expecting a great speech. He accuses Hore-Belisha of being too complacent. The latter gets up and says, "When and where?" Winston replies, "I have not come unprepared," and begins to fumble among his notes where there are some press-cuttings. He takes time. He finds them. But they are not the best cuttings, and the ones he reads out excuse rather than implicate Hore-Belisha. Winston becomes confused. He tries to rally his speech, but the wind has gone out of his sails, which flop wretchedly. "He is becoming an old man," says Bill Mabane beside me.*

A sad case, that of Winston Churchill at sixty-four, already edging toward senility with grand, empty phrases and the fumblings of old age. Once universally regarded as the most promising young politician in British public life, Churchill declined relentlessly after World War I. Now he was trying to redeem a broken career by appealing to the most primitive of instincts, ethnic hatred. He was forever speaking of "German bloodlust" and of the "German threat" at a time when others were working to build a new Anglo-German understanding based on mutual respect and reciprocity. While successive Prime Ministers, first Baldwin and then Chamberlain, were skillfully nursing the delicate recovery of the economy from the slump, Churchill wanted to sacrifice all they had achieved by launching a ruinous rearmament program, to match his own inflated estimate of German strength. Again and again he challenged the sober official estimates by producing back-of-the-envelope calculations of the balance of military power, which became more and more alarmist. In a flood of private memoranda to senior officials and members of the government, and, more guardedly, in public speeches, he played a "numbers game" with information that was leaked to him by self-interested sources in the aircraft industry, by hawkish bureaucrats, and by disloyal members of the armed forces, who shared his paranoid fears of Germany.

For example, on September 19, 1935, the Air Ministry circulated a confidential estimate which clearly proved that "air parity" was being maintained: the Germans had 850 fighter aircraft in squadron service while the British had 800. The difference was of course insignificant. There was an "essential parity." In reply, Churchill first tried to confuse the issue by introducing a misleading comparison of the expenditures of the two sides: "The Germans are spending four times as much this year upon air as we are. . . . How then can it be pretended that we are overtaking? . . . On the contrary, we are falling ever more behind and this will continue. . . ." Churchill then proceeded to criticize the official estimate of German air strength carefully calculated by the Air Ministry. The Ministry had pointed out that Germany only possessed a "first-line air strength of 594" machines, but with the niggling pedantry that was typical of his obsession with the nuts and bolts of military power, Churchill declared:

> The figure 594 may correspond to some conventional classification of first-line air strength in vogue at the Air Ministry. . . . It has no relation to the true military air power of Germany at the present time. It would be misleading to use the figure 594 without at the same time stating that in the formations which have not yet been included in that total there are admittedly 1,275 trained pilots and 1,556 military machines in a different phase of organization.

The air staff answered the memorandum in convincing detail, tactfully reminding Churchill that they had the evidence; in gentle irony, they wrote that their own assumptions "may not find ready acceptance by those to whom the mass of intelli-

Edward N. Luttwak, who writes frequently in these pages on defense policy, is associate director of the Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research at Johns Hopkins. His latest book is *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire* (Johns Hopkins University Press).

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gence data is not accessible." Rising above the narrow military argument, the air staff also pointed out that if it were made clear to Germany that France had no intention of building as many as 2,000 first-line aircraft, "there is no reason why Germany, on her declared policy and intentions, should herself go higher than 1,500. . . ."

One marvels at the patience of the officials and of the Crown's Ministers who continued to reply, year after year, in public and in private, to Churchill's relentlessly detailed objections. Churchill would not accept their judgment that air parity was being effectively maintained; Churchill would not cease complaining that the fleet's readiness was inadequate (again citing facts and figures leaked by hard-line anti-German elements); Churchill nagged that the pace of tank deliveries to the army was too slow; and indeed he found fault with everything. Again and again it was explained to him that his figures on German strength were inflated, and that in any case all the evidence showed that the Germans were only intent on achieving "parity."

The whole thing, of course, brings to mind Senator Jackson's wrong-headed insistence today that missile "throw-weight" should be counted in evaluating the strategic balance, Paul Nitze's obsession with the vulnerability of the Minuteman ICBM's to Soviet counterforce attacks, and General Keegan's claim that Soviet reload missiles should be counted over and above the customary SALT count of missiles in silos. There is the same narrow concentration on numbers, and the same refusal to accept the opinion of the best people in the fields of foreign and military policy.

In all his estimates, Churchill ignored the fundamental fact that while Britain had only Germany as its enemy, the Germans had to guard against the French as well. They were thus bound to need more weapons than Britain. This is the identical misconception of our own hawks, who fail to understand that the Soviet Union needs more strategic power than we do, since the Russians must contend with the Chinese while we have only one antagonist. And Churchill's incitement, of course, brings to mind the paranoia of the recently founded Committee on the Present Danger. The hysterical phraseology currently being employed by such leaders of that committee as Eugene V. Rostow and Nitze occurs over and over in the flood of Churchill's speeches and articles. "I say there is a state of emergency. We are in danger as we have never been in danger before. . . ." And this in July 1936!—a time when Hitler, having disposed of the hotheads of the SA, had clearly proven himself to be a force for moderation, and in the wake of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935 which, as the Foreign Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare pointed out, was a pathbreaking initiative in arms limitation, "an agreement profitable alike to peace and to the taxpayer."

Churchill's endless harping on the minutiae of the Anglo-German military balance ultimately derived from his inability to understand that the new Germany, while no doubt determined to attain a full measure of equality as a European power, was essentially as interested in keeping the peace as Britain itself. Hitler, like Brezhnev in our own day, had himself fought in the front lines, had seen countless men die in useless combat, and knew as well as anyone that a war could only be futile and catastrophic. But Churchill would never allow Hitler the benefit of the doubt; his closed mind ignored all the evidence of an essential moderation that convinced the *Times* and all the best academic authorities. Instead, Churchill always tried to evoke atavistic images of conflict, calculated to impede the accommodation that the imperative of peace made inevitable. In March 1933, with the Germans having done absolutely nothing to warrant such accusations, Churchill said in the House of Commons:

> When we read about Germany, when we watch with surprise and distress the tumultuous insurgence of ferocity and war spirit, the pitiless ill-treatment of minorities, one cannot help feeling glad that the fierce passions that are raging in Germany have not found, as yet, any other outlet but upon Germans.

Even those most friendly to him found it difficult to tolerate Churchill's persistent misrepresentations of the new Germany. More in sorrow than in anger, on May 2, 1935, Colonel Thomas Moore, MP, was moved to remark in the House, after yet another of Churchill's anti-German outbursts: "Although one hates to criticize anyone in the evening of his days, nothing can excuse the Right Honorable Member for Epping [Mr. Churchill] for having permeated his entire speech with the atmosphere that Germany is arming for war."

In commenting on a draft speech that Churchill had sent him, in which he again used the Jewish question and the issue of human rights in an attempt to whip up anti-German hysteria, R.M. Barrington-Ward of the *Times* wrote to Churchill on September 23, 1936:

> However alien to our way of thinking may be the governing philosophies of other countries, we feel that the only safe and impartial test to apply to them is whether or not they are ready for practical collaboration, political and economic. We should, for example, certainly be against premature abandonment of the hope, supported by many authoritative pronouncements on the German side, that Germany is prepared to reach a general understanding and settlement.

It seems that some fundamental lessons of statecraft must be learned over and over again. For nowadays also the spokesmen of the Council on Foreign Relations and other voices of the foreign-policy elite find themselves forced to repeat this

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simple truth in regard to our own dealings with the Soviet Union. Surely it should be obvious that we cannot impose our own notion of human rights on the Soviet Union; what counts is "practical collaboration, political and economic." As for Churchill, ignoring Barrington-Ward's appeal for moderation, he gave his speech as originally drafted. In it, he did not hesitate to criticize most intrusively the internal policy of Germany, at a time when such controversy could only harm the quiet but effective diplomacy of the government:

> How could we bear, nursed as we have been in a free atmosphere, to be gagged and muzzled; to have spies, eavesdroppers, and delators at every corner; to have even private conversation caught up and used against us by the secret police and all their agents and creatures; to be arrested and interned without trial; or to be tried by political or party courts. . .?
>
> How could we bear to be treated like schoolboys, . . .to see philosophers, teachers, and authors bullied and toiled to death in concentration camps; to be forced every hour to conceal the natural workings of the human intellect and the pulsations of the human heart? Why, I say that rather than submit to such oppression, there is no length we would not go to. . . .

Stripped of the rhetorical trickery of cadenced repetition ("gagged and muzzled"; "spies, eavesdroppers, and delators"), the speech was a simple call to destructive war. Enlightened opinion was certainly saddened by the persecution of writers and intellectuals, dissidents and Jews. But unlike Churchill, the representatives of elite opinion in the Foreign Office, in the universities, and in the best newspapers understood that there was no alternative to accommodation, and that if one interfered in the domestic affairs of the new Germany there could be no accommodation, and more important, no disarmament.

On November 6, 1938, Hitler himself was moved to respond to Churchill's fantasy that the Nazi regime did not enjoy the universal support of the German people: "If Mr. Churchill had less to do with traitors and more with Germans, he would see how mad his talk is, for I can assure this man, who seems to live on the moon, that there are no forces in Germany opposed to the regime." Nowadays Brezhnev is forced to say much the same thing in response to much the same provocation:

> Our opponents would like to find the forces to oppose socialism from within our countries. Since there are no such forces, however, as there are no oppressed, exploited classes within socialist society, and no repressed nationalities, false publicity is being used to create the appearance of "internal opposition." It is exactly for this reason that a clamor is being raised about the so-called "dissidents" and about "the violation of human rights" in socialist countries.

Barrington-Ward's letter had also delicately alluded to another of Churchill's tactics, the selective quotation of Hitler's statements. Churchill would cite the ritual, nationalistic rhetoric that understandably occurred in Hitler's speeches as if it accurately reflected his intentions. When Barrington-Ward spoke of "many authoritative pronouncements on the German side," he was of course referring to the sort of thing that Putzi Hanfstaengl would say at London dinner parties, and not to the purely formal language of a Hitler speech at a massive Nuremberg rally. Surely the true articulation of national intentions was more likely to be heard behind closed doors from visiting English-speaking German spokesmen like Hanfstaengl—who was known to be close to Hitler—than in extracts selected from public speeches given before vast crowds.

This too is a lesson that has been forgotten. For surely what Mr. Arbatov of the U.S.A. Institute of Moscow tells his Harvard friends at Cambridge dinner parties is a better guide to Soviet intentions than the pronouncements of Brezhnev addressing 260 million Russians. After all, one can hardly expect national leaders to admit publicly that they have abandoned their ideology and their declared national goals. The obvious fact that Churchill tried to obscure was that war had simply become obsolete as an instrument of state policy. And with war having become impossible, it followed that the bellicose German declarations had to be purely ritualistic. Nevertheless, Churchill would quote German statements on the feasibility of war, just as Leon Gouré and his colleagues at Miami University do today with Russian pronouncements. Thus the April 15, 1977 issue of their *Soviet World Outlook* (whose lurid red print is itself no doubt meant to evoke sinister images) is filled with such distortions. An article by Soviet Minister of Defense Ustinov—a man whose appointment was greeted by all right-thinking experts as proof positive of a new moderation in Moscow—is excerpted as follows:

> Aggressive forces, opponents of détente and disarmament who do not want to renounce the policy of military adventures. . .are still active in a number of capitalist countries. . . .The danger of a new world war has not been eliminated either. For this reason it. . .continues to be an objective necessity constantly to strengthen our country's defenses and to raise the combat readiness of Soviet armed forces.

Ustinov is quoted again from *Pravda* (February 23, 1977): "Our party and the entire Soviet people, following the behest of our great leader, regard the strengthening of the country's defense and of its armed forces as a sacred duty. . . ." More of the same follows, with quotations from Deputy Defense Minister V.F. Tolubko ("We need constantly to strengthen the country's defense capability and the combat might of the Soviet armed

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forces"), and Chief of Staff Marshall Ogarkov ("The Communist party and Soviet government are adopting all necessary measures to strengthen the country's defense capability and to increase the Soviet armed forces' combat might"), and yet more.

Fortunately, as in Churchill's day, we too have trained professional experts in the better universities and research institutes who teach us to ignore such empty declarations; thanks to their reassurance, we may rest as easy as Churchill's opponents, knowing that the intent is peaceful even if the language is bellicose. Unlike Gouré et al., these enlightened observers recognize that accommodation is the only possible policy in an age when war has become unthinkable. The important thing, as Mr. Arbatov points out, is to make sure that Moscow's moderation is met by a similar moderation in Washington. But here the chief obstacle is the meddling of ambitious politicians into the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. Just as Churchill pandered to the support of the Jews by making much of the sufferings of their coreligionists in Germany, preferring the sound and fury of his own voice to the quiet diplomacy that was bound to be more effective in dealing with the problem, so do cynical politicians of our own day, like Senators Jackson and Moynihan, pander to the Jews, and with the same counterproductive and dangerous results.

THERE is an even more direct parallel with our own day in the fate of Czechoslovakia. In 1938, the editorial voices of the best papers, with the *Times* in the lead, agreed with all sober opinion on the one essential fact: Czechoslovakia would inevitably belong to the German sphere of influence; it was a fact imposed by geography and the realities of power. No sane man could possibly want war, and it was only war that could challenge the natural course of events. In the same constructive spirit in which the United States government refused to allow the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia to interfere with the opening of arms-limitation talks with the Soviet Union the year after, Chamberlain stated the matter in his own calm and clear-sighted way:

> The path which leads to [an accommodation with Germany]. . .is long and bristles with obstacles. The question of Czechoslovakia is the latest and perhaps the most dangerous. Now that we have got past it, I feel that it may be possible to make further progress along the road to sanity.

And indeed, it was only a matter of sanity and essential realism. But realism need not be void of vision and hope. Chamberlain continued:

> I am a realist—nevertheless. . .I do see fresh opportunities of approaching this subject of disarmament opening up before us, and I believe that they are at least as hopeful today as they have been at any previous time. It is to such tasks—the winning back of confidence, the gradual removal of hostility between nations until they feel that they can safely discard their weapons, one by one, that I would wish to devote what energy and time may be left to me.

In the debate in the House, speaker after speaker rose to congratulate the Prime Minister on his achievement at Munich. Churchill was one of the few who carped at the achievement:

> *Churchill:* I will, therefore, begin by saying what everybody would like to ignore or forget but which must nevertheless be stated, namely, that we have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat. . . .
>
> *Viscountess Astor:* Nonsense!

And nonsense it was. Churchill, as usual, spoke at great length, and in stark contrast to the simple realism of Chamberlain, his declamations were brutal:

> There can never be friendship between British democracy and the Nazi power, that power. . . which cheers its onward course by a barbarous paganism, which vaunts the spirit of aggression and conquest, which derives strength and perverted pleasure from persecution, and uses as we have seen with pitiless brutality the threat of murderous force.

In the wake of Churchill's outburst in the Munich debate even the normally patient Chamberlain was exasperated. On October 15, 1938, he wrote to his sister: ". . . unhappily there are a great many people who have no faith that we can ever [settle down to make the world a better place . . .] and do all they can to make their own gloomy prophecies come true."

An inflamed rhetoric reminiscent of Churchill's was but recently to be heard in Daniel P. Moynihan's speeches at the UN, which were inviting us to renew the ideological struggle of the worst days of the cold war. Just as informed opinion here was prompt to condemn Moynihan's excesses, Churchill too got what he deserved. The *Times* wrote: "Churchill treated a crowded House to prophecies which made Jeremiah appear to be an optimist. . . ." The *Daily Express* described his speech as "an alarmist oration." Naturally the vast majority of the House was with Chamberlain, who won a resounding vote of confidence, while only a small band of thirty hawkish Conservative MP's followed Churchill in abstention.

Churchill's obstinacy in attacking the policy of his own party understandably endangered his tenure in the House. Lord Rothemere warned that "any member of [the Conservative] party who challenges [Chamberlain] may suffer a complete eclipse. The public is so terrified of being bombed that they will support anyone who keeps them out of the war." Even Sir Harry Goschen, one of Churchill's staunchest supporters in his constituency, wrote privately after the Munich speech: "I cannot help thinking it was rather a pity that he broke up the harmony of the House by the

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speech he made. . . ." Another of Churchill's former supporters, Colin Thornton-Kemsley, broke with him over Munich, and became the leader of a determined attempt to unseat him. In a constituency debate, Thornton-Kemsley argued that the policy of containment had failed but that there was still time to lay the foundations of an enduring peace based on the realization that war would be to no one's advantage and that German interests "need at no vital point conflict with our own." Churchill survived the effort to unseat him, but only just.

GIVEN his compulsive militarism, Churchill could scarcely understand the ineluctable necessity of arms limitation. Throughout the years in which disarmament was a chief aim of successive British governments, Churchill was forever pressing for more arms. Addressing the Conservative Association at Oxford University on February 23, 1934, Churchill spoke of Britain's need for rearmament "in order for us to be safe in our Island Home." Oxford, like our own Harvard, was an elite institution. Perhaps Churchill's war cry might have gone down well with the uneducated, but not with the sophisticated student body of Oxford. When he reached the words "Island Home," they laughed and laughed.

Earlier on that same visit Churchill had suffered a crushing defeat in debate. A German Rhodes scholar, Adolf Schlepegrell, had argued with Churchill over the Versailles treaty. Schlepegrell asked: "Does Mr. Churchill believe that the German people, the men and women who live in Germany today, are responsible for the war? Would he please answer 'yes' or 'no.'" Churchill said "yes." In a dignified gesture, Schlepegrell bowed to Churchill and walked out through the middle of the audience amid a tremendous uproar. Many Oxford undergraduates were delighted by his conduct. A few days later Schlepegrell was elected secretary of the Oxford Union, the highest honor a student could attain. The Oxford students had already shown how far they had advanced from primitive nationalism by their recent pledge never to fight for "King and Country," and now their election of Schlepegrell was a fitting reply to Churchill.*

Churchill's wholly negative view of arms limitation was exemplified by a speech he gave in the House of Commons on November 23, 1932, at a time when German rearmament was scarcely visible: "Do not delude yourselves . . . that all that Germany is asking for is equal status. I believe the refined term now is equal qualitative status. . . . That is not what Germany is seeking. . . . [They] are not looking for status. They are looking for weapons." Here again we have a direct parallel, for the common denominator of our own hawks is their refusal to acknowledge that the Soviet Union aims at nothing more than "essential equivalence," which is the more refined term for parity. "Before each disarmament conference," Churchill intoned,

> . . . the poor good people of the League of Nations had clapped for joy; yet as each conference progressed they had been deceived. The process is apparently endless. . .and so is the pathetic belief with which it is inevitably greeted. . . .I cannot recall any time. . .when the gap between the kind of words which statesmen used and what was actually happening in many countries was so great as it is now. The habit of saying smooth things and uttering pious platitudes and sentiments to gain applause, without relation to the underlying facts, is more pronounced now than it has ever been in my experience.

Note the similarity between Churchill's argument and that of the spokesmen of the military-industrial complex in our own day. First, he argues that the adversary is not seeking what we call parity but rather superiority, as if military superiority were still a meaningful concept. Next, he argues against all reason that this military power is meant to serve goals of aggrandizement. And finally, he mocks the noble sentiments of hope that provide the most powerful impulse toward disarmament.

We can be thankful that in our own time, as in Churchill's day, such hysteria is drowned out by the common sense of organizations like SANE, the Coalition Against the B-1, the Federation of American Scientists, the Center for Defense Information, and countless other groups working for peace, not to speak of the many sound research programs supported by bodies such as the United Nations Association. All these groups, animated by some of the finest minds of the nation, agree that the main obstacle to arms limitation and eventually disarmament is the entrenched power of our own defense contractors, as well as the narrow bureaucratic interests of the Pentagon and the paranoid fears of unreconstructed cold warriors.

CHURCHILL then—like our own hawks today in connection with the Soviet Union—was driven into his misconception of the armaments question, and of the true intentions of the new Germany, by one fundamental error which pervaded all his thinking. He utterly failed to comprehend the irreversible change that had drastically altered the nature of international politics since those times. In a period when the stark simplicities of armed conflict had become simply irrelevant, Churchill's thought was still colored by his youthful experiences in colonial warfare and by his memory of World War I.

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* Schlepegrell, incidentally, returned to Germany and to a most promising career, only to find his path blocked by a Jewish maternal grandmother; by 1938 he was a naturalized British subject, and he now lives in Paris where he has been working for the OECD.

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Lord Linlithgow was one of many who tried out of disinterested friendship to persuade Churchill of the error of his ways. On May 19, 1933, he wrote to Churchill: "You envisage . . . an approaching period of red tooth and claw, a struggle for the means to live. I doubt it, Winston!" Linlithgow pointed out that the world was governed by an increased "interdependence of trade and distribution," with economic negotiations replacing military adventures, and economic integration replacing racial and imperial conflict. Such integration would result in "enhanced good will between nations and races." Linlithgow disagreed profoundly with Churchill but was obviously writing in good will. "I hope, my dear Winston, that I am never impertinent to anyone. Forgive me, then, if I say that . . . you are hanging, hairy, from a branch, while you sputter the atavistic shibboleths of an age destined very soon to retreat into the forgotten past. . . ."

But all to no avail. Churchill simply could not understand that "interdependence" had become the critical fact of international life. He continued to see specters of war, and he continued to oppose the patient diplomacy of his own party leaders that was wholly dedicated to the cause of peace. His reward was a deepening political isolation and a total alienation from the centers of enlightened opinion in his own society. By 1938, his articles were no longer printed by the best newspapers. After all, those in charge had a sense of responsibility. The *Times* then, like *Foreign Affairs* nowadays, would not print articles calculated to incite the worst nationalistic passions, and which might sabotage the policy of accommodation pursued by the government. For it is important to realize that such policies require more than leadership from the top. They also require the tacit cooperation of the enlightened, guided by their firm sense of international realities, in pursuit of the goal of peace.

And aside from the establishment, the left wing too played a most useful and constructive role, helping the government to resist the dangerous pressures for rearmament. In fact, the Left could be counted upon to oppose all defense expenditures. To be sure, they could not refrain from sniping at the new Germany over the issue of political rights and over the trade-union question (on which the British unions of the 30's were no better than the cold warriors of the AFL-CIO are today), and on the Jewish question. But since the left wing firmly maintained its principled opposition to rearmament, everyone understood that it too was in favor of an accommodation.

THUS, at sixty-four, Churchill was a back-bench MP without office—a failure, as his equally ambitious father had been. However, he still made a good living by writing lowbrow articles in the popular press, by mass-producing popular histories, and by broadcasting light feature pieces for the American commercial radio networks, then as now less discriminating than the BBC which did its bit for peace by keeping his warmongering off the air. On August 8, 1939, Churchill spoke to his American listeners:

> Holiday time, ladies and gentlemen! Holiday time, my friends across the Atlantic!. . .Let me look back—let me see. How did we spend our summer holidays twenty-five years ago? Why, those were the very days when the German advance guards were breaking into Belgium and trampling down its people on their march toward Paris!

Churchill continued. He spoke of a "hush all over Europe." What sort of hush was it? he asked:

> Alas! it is the hush of suspense, and in many lands it is the hush of fear. Listen! No, listen carefully; I think I hear something—yes, there it was quite clear. Don't you hear it? It is the tramp of armies crunching the gravel of the parade-grounds, splashing through rain-soaked fields, the tramp of two million German soldiers and more than a million Italians—"going on maneuvers"—yes, only on maneuvers! Of course it's only maneuvers—just like last year. After all, the Dictators must train their soldiers. They could scarcely do less in common prudence, when the Danes, the Dutch, the Swiss, the Albanians—and of course the Jews—may leap out upon them at any moment. . . .Besides these German and Italian armies may have another work of liberation to perform. It was only last year they liberated Austria from the horrors of self-government. It was only in March they freed the Czechoslovak republic from the misery of independent existence. It was only two years ago that Signor Mussolini gave the ancient kingdom of Abyssinia its Magna Carta. It is only two months ago that little Albania got its writ of Habeas Corpus. . . .No wonder that armies are tramping when there is so much liberation to be done. . . .

* * *

Twenty-seven days later Britain was at war—the unnecessary war, as Churchill was later to call it, caused by the British and French failure to undertake the measures of military preparedness which might have deterred the Germans from their aggressive designs and which might have led to the eventual overthrow of Hitler from within.

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Settling the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Bernard Lewis

THE future of the Arab-Israel conflict will be shaped by the course of events at three levels: first, that of relations between the state of Israel and the Arab states, more particularly those which are its neighbors; second, the relationship between the Israelis and the Palestinians; and third, the policies and actions of the great powers, and in particular of the United States and the Soviet Union. Much of the complexity and difficulty of the situation arises from the intermingling and interaction of these three. Yet, though connected, they are basically different, and affected by different factors. In each of them certain conditions are necessary if there is to be any chance of progress toward peace or even toward a settlement.

In recent years there have been some signs of significant change in the relations between Israel and its Arab neighbors. In some of these, leaders have indicated a degree of willingness, even if expressed in carefully indirect terms and hedged with restrictions, to accept the existence of Israel as a state. Such an acceptance, if meant seriously and conveyed convincingly, could transform the Arab-Israeli conflict. It would not, of course, in itself solve the problem, but it would at least bring it within range of a solution by transforming it into a normal political dispute—that is to say a conflict in which the issue is not the existence of a state but a disagreement between existing states about territory, like, for example, the long struggle between France and Germany over Alsace-Lorraine or the current Greco-Turkish dispute about Cyprus. Merely to name these examples is to indicate that even after such a transformation, the problem would by no means be easy to solve. It would, however, be possible in that, at least, the issues would be such as can be formulated and discussed at the level of intergovernmental diplomatic negotiations. Such negotiation would no doubt be long and arduous. Without a normalization of the conflict, it cannot even begin.

Some Arab states still refuse to agree to any form of acceptance of the continued existence of Israel. Of these, the two most important are Iraq and Libya. Their importance is due to several circumstances—their espousal of radical causes, their possession of ample means to further these causes, their unfastidious political style, and their position on the far side of Israel's eastern and western neighbors. While these states, lacking any frontier with Israel, are not directly involved in a military sense, they provide arms, money, and above all encouragement to some who are. In addition, their attitudes and activities create great problems for those Arab leaders who have agreed to compromise on some form of recognition. Their activities throw doubt on the validity and permanence of whatever recognition is given and renew the ever-present danger of a competition in extremism.

Far more important, however, than the refusal of the remoter Arab states is that of the Palestinians —the most concerned group, the most important, yet the most difficult to define, identify, and meet. Here a distinction must be made between the Palestine entity and the Palestinian people. The Palestine entity is an ideological program. The Palestinian people, however, by whatever name or names they may be designated, are a reality and their problem is a real and painful one which must be solved as part of any general settlement. There has in the past been some doubt as to who was entitled to speak for them—the Jordanian monarchy, the local leaders on the West Bank, or the militant organizations centered in Beirut and grouped under the auspices of the Palestine Liberation Organization. The claims of the third have now been formally accepted by the spokesmen of the first and, to an extent difficult to define with precision, by the second also.

In dealing with Israel, the Arabs have basically a choice between two objectives. One is to accept the existence of Israel as a fact and to try and reach a settlement on the best terms available to them. The other is to pursue the original objective, never yet renounced, of unraveling the past a bit at a time—first the 1973 war, then the 1967 war, then

BERNARD LEWIS is Cleveland Dodge Professor of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University and a long-term member of the Institute for Advanced Study. Among his many works are *The Arabs in History*, *The Middle East and the West*, and *History—Remembered, Recovered, and Invented*. Mr. Lewis is also the editor of *Islam and the Arab World* and co-editor of *The Cambridge History of Islam* and *The Encyclopedia of Islam*.

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the 1948 war, and so ultimately to undo what they regard as the great injustice constituted by the very establishment and existence of Israel. Even for those willing to act according to the first objective, the option of the second is retained by the common use of open-ended formulas, notably the demand for "the restoration of the rights of the Palestinians"—a phrase capable of many interpretations.

The leaders of the PLO have, since the foundation of that body in January 1964, made no secret of their refusal to agree to any kind of compromise involving the continued existence of the state of Israel. Though they no longer speak of "driving the Jews into the sea," their declared program of a secular Arab state of Palestine in which those Palestinian Jews who remain would find their place as a religious minority, would mean the end of both Israeli statehood and Jewish nationhood. Both of these concepts are indeed explicitly denied in the PLO Charter, first adopted in May 1964 and revised in July 1968. It has not been changed since and all attempts to modify it have failed. The following articles may be cited:

1. Palestine is the homeland of the Arab Palestinian people; it is an indivisible part of the Arab homeland, and the Palestinian people are an integral part of the Arab nation.
2. Palestine, with the boundaries it had during the British Mandate, is an indivisible territorial unit.
5. The Palestinians are those Arab nationals who, until 1947, normally resided in Palestine regardless of whether they were evicted from it or have stayed there. Anyone born, after that date, of a Palestinian father—whether inside Palestine or outside it—is also a Palestinian.
6. The Jews who had normally resided in Palestine until the beginning of the Zionist invasion will be considered Palestinians.
13. Arab unity and the liberation of Palestine are two complementary objectives, the attainment of either of which facilitates the attainment of the other. Thus, Arab unity leads to the liberation of Palestine; the liberation of Palestine leads to Arab unity; and work toward the realization of one objective proceeds side by side with work toward the realization of the other.
19. The partition of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of the state of Israel are entirely illegal, regardless of the passage of time, because they were contrary to the will of the Palestinian people and to their natural right in their homeland, and inconsistent with the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, particularly the right to self-determination.
20. The Balfour Declaration, the Mandate for Palestine, and everything that has been based upon them, are deemed null and void. Claims of historical or religious ties of Jews with Palestine are incompatible with the facts of history and the true conception of what constitutes statehood. Judaism, being a religion, is not an independent nationality. Nor do Jews constitute a single nation with an identity of its own; they are citizens of the states to which they belong.
21. The Arab Palestinian people, expressing themselves by the armed Palestinian revolution, reject all solutions which are substitutes for the total liberation of Palestine and reject all proposals aiming at the liquidation of the Palestinian problem, or its internationalization.

OF LATE, some of the Palestinian leaders have begun to hint rather less obliquely than in the past that they might be willing to accept part of Palestine as an interim arrangement without thereby relinquishing their claims to the remainder. At the meeting of the Palestine National Council held in Cairo in the first week of June 1974, there was a lively discussion of the attitude to be adopted by the PLO in view of the proposed negotiations in Geneva. *Finally, a resolution was passed agreeing to set up* a "patriotic, independent fighting people's authority" in any part of Palestine which might be gained from Israel. The word state was carefully avoided in designating the Arab authority to be set up in such a piece of territory, and other articles in the resolution emphasized that there was to be no recognition of any kind of Israel and no acceptance of its existence. The points are clearly made in Resolutions 1, 3, and 4:

1. The PLO reaffirms its previous attitude concerning Security Council Resolution 242 which obliterates the patriotic and national rights of our people and treats our national cause as a refugee problem. It therefore refuses categorically any negotiations on the basis of this Resolution at any level of inter-Arab or international negotiation including the Geneva Conference.
3. The PLO will struggle against any proposal to set up a Palestine entity at the price of recognition, peace, and secure boundaries, giving up the historic right and depriving our people of its right to return and to self-determination on its national soil.
4. The PLO will consider any step toward liberation which is accomplished as a stage in the pursuit of its strategy for the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state, as laid down in the decisions of previous National Council meetings.

At the time, these resolutions, agreeing to set up a PLO authority in a part and not the whole of Palestine, were hailed as a triumph of the moderates. The point was made clearer in a decision adopted at the Rabat summit conference in October 1974. The text "affirms that any Palestinian land that is liberated through the pursuit of the struggle in its different forms will return to its lawful Palestinian owner, under the leadership of the PLO, and affirms the right to set up an independent national authority in the liberated land." The same line of thought appears in various PLO and Ba'thist publications which speak of a "solution by stages," of which the recovery of a part of Palestine would be first. The Arabic word *hall*, commonly used in this context, appositely

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combines the meanings of solution and dissolution.

More recently, after the military and political setbacks which the Palestinians have suffered in Lebanon, some of their leaders have began to indicate that they would be willing to go a step further, and use the word state to designate such an interim authority. At a meeting of the Palestine National Council held in Cairo in March 1977, after long and sometimes heated arguments, the delegates agreed to set up an "independent national state . . . on the national soil" in areas ceded by Israel. This was the only change made in the 1974 program. In a new fifteen-point declaration, the Council reaffirmed its rejection of UN Resolution 242 which, by implication, accepted the existence of Israel and treated the Palestinians purely as a refugee problem. The declaration also called for the escalation of the struggle, using all means "to defeat and liquidate the occupation"; it called for the restoration of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinians "without recognition of or reconciliation with the Zionist entity." The last point of the declaration affirms the right of the PLO to participate in all conferences dealing with Palestine, as "an independent and equal party"—thus excluding the various possibilities, recently discussed, of a Palestinian presence in other Arab delegations. The meeting did not accept any amendment to the PLO Charter, which therefore stands unchanged. As Winston Churchill once remarked in another context, they showed their moderation by agreeing to eat their meal in successive courses instead of demanding that it all be served at once. This kind of moderation indeed represents some progress but hardly constitutes the basis even for discussion, let alone the basis for settlement.

As between Israelis and Palestinians, several solutions are theoretically possible. One is that embodied in the Charter of the PLO and reemphasized in its most recent resolutions—the death of Israel and the rebirth of Palestine. Since no state—neither Israel nor any other—will voluntarily cooperate in its own demise, this solution can only be accomplished by force of arms. To outsiders, particularly to Westerners, such a contingency may seem remote; to the dominant generation of Israelis, still seared by the memory both of Nazi crimes and of Western acquiescence, it remains a fearsome possibility and one that overshadows both their political and strategic thinking. As close observers of the Arab media, relying on a knowledge of Arabic rather than on translators, they are more conscious than are most Westerners of the seething hatred which these convey. Here it may be recalled that about half the Israelis belong to families which fled from Arab countries and have painful memories of the circumstances of their departure. Their fears for their own future will not be allayed by the style of conflict even in purely Arab struggles such as in Jordan in 1970 and, more recently, in Lebanon. No assessment of Israeli attitudes and responses which fails to take account of these facts can be accurate.

A second theoretically possible solution is a bi-national state of Arabs and Jews. Here there are two main obstacles. The first is that there is no group of any importance, either among the Arabs or among the Jews, that desires such a solution. Its only supporters are some small Jewish left-wing groups and some Western interpreters of the PLO who either misunderstand or misrepresent its program.* The PLO blueprint for the "secular, democratic republic of Palestine" never speaks of Arabs and Jews—only of Muslims, Christians, and Jews, emphasizing that Jews would appear only as a religious minority, not as a national group, and that the secular, democratic republic, while having no specific religion, would certainly have a nationality in that it would be an Arab state and ultimately part of a greater Arab union. But even if, by some miracle of diplomacy, a bi-national state were to be set up, its chances of success among peoples so disparate and divided would be slim.

A third possibility is a new and final partition of the territories placed under British Mandate after World War I and designated "Palestine," and subsequently divided by British administrative action into Palestine and Transjordan. For such a new partition there are broadly two alternatives. One, now much under discussion, is the creation of a new Arab state to be called Palestine and consisting of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, its frontiers and its relations with both Israel and Jordan to be determined if possible by agreement, otherwise by force. The other solution, preferred by the Israelis, is to have not three but two states in the area. One of them would be Israel; the other would be an Arab state on both banks of the Jordan which its people might call either Palestine or Jordan or both, as they prefer.

LEFT to themselves the Arabs and Israelis would probably, sooner or later, have arrived at some sort of modus vivendi. The Arabs are unable to conquer Israel by their own unaided efforts; the Israelis could not take on the Arab world as a whole, and even the most crushing victories over Israel's immediate Arab neighbors would, in the long run, be inconclusive. Both sides are weary of endless and futile struggle, of the strains of permanent readiness for war, of the wasteful deflection to military purposes of

* According to an article in the *Reader's Digest* of April 1977: "The Palestinians formerly were virtually united in wanting to destroy Israel by replacing it with a bi-national state of Arabs and Jews in Palestine. Now, however, the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the umbrella group of the Palestinians, seems to be moving toward acceptance of peaceful relations between a pre-1967 Israel and a Palestinian state comprising the West Bank and Gaza." The author is mistaken in both the old and new positions which he ascribes to the PLO. They never proposed a bi-national state, but on the contrary explicitly rejected it; they have just reaffirmed their refusal of any form of peaceful relations with any Israel of any size.

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scarce and much-needed human and material resources. Increasingly, both sides show signs of disillusionment with ideological mystiques and of doubt about the attainability or even the desirability of some of the aims which they have been pursuing. Without outside interference, this would in time have led to one of two results—either a compromise solution satisfactory to neither side but acceptable to both or, more probably, a smoldering minor local conflict, troublesome but not dangerous to those directly involved, and unimportant to the rest of the world. The Arab refugees would have been resettled without international aid or intervention, as were the incomparably greater numbers who fled or were driven from their homes in India, Pakistan, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the lost German territories, and Africa, when the world was reshaped in the aftermath of World War II.

The Arabs and Israelis will not, however, be left to themselves, and the final outcome of the dispute will be decided not only by the participants but also and, indeed, perhaps principally, by the great powers. In practice, this means the two superpowers. Lesser interested powers in Europe, Asia, and Africa, though much concerned and deeply affected by developments in the Middle East, are unlikely to look beyond their immediate and unenlightened self-interest. The United Nations, immobilized by the politics of its members and increasingly enslaved by its own professionalism, will incline, with this as with some other difficult problems, to conserve what it cannot resolve. More and more, the struggle in the Middle East has become a clash of interests and of wills between the United States and the USSR in which the Arab-Israeli dispute is only one of several issues.

A characteristic feature of this confrontation is its asymmetry. Russia is ruthless, determined, and consistent, but hampered by economic weakness, technological backwardness, defective information and judgment, and pervasive inefficiency. America is rich, well-informed, and efficient, but is crippled by divided counsels and purposes and hag-ridden by guilt. Russia's friends need massive military and economic aid and can usually count on getting it; America's friends need far less but can never be quite sure. As a Turkish general once remarked, the trouble with having the Americans as friends is that you can never be sure when they will turn around and stab themselves in the back. Russia exploits every opportunity, cynically if not always effectively, to extend its power. America seeks to limit that power but at times shows an alarming lack of firmness and of realism—as in its recurring inability to distinguish between friends and enemies, a necessary condition of survival. Russia's advance into the Middle East is imperial in the traditional sense rather than imperialist in the modern sense. Its further progress is, however, by no means inevitable. The Middle East of today shows many parallels to the Balkan Peninsula of an earlier time where both Czarist and Soviet Russia attempted so much and achieved so little. But there are great differences, and with very few obvious exceptions, the local powers in the Middle East are unlikely to offer the same resistance as the Balkan peoples have done and are still doing. Barring changes within the Communist world, only the United States can save the Middle East from ultimate Soviet domination.

THE consequences of the war of October 1973 have been variously assessed. Three main political results appear to have followed from it.

The first of these is the belief of the Arabs, shared by many others, in their victory. Although the military results of the war are at least debatable, there can be no doubt that these results were translated, in part by American diplomacy, into a political victory for the Arabs. Rightly or wrongly, the belief that Israel was militarily unassailable, whether in the short or in the long run, is now open to question. This means that Israel's survival is once again at issue, and awareness of this necessarily colors the perceptions and responses of Arabs and Israelis alike.

The second change, linked with this, is that full American support for Israel in an emergency is no longer regarded as axiomatic. For some crucial days in October 1973 that support was, or was believed to be, in doubt, and this inevitably led to the hope among the Arabs and the corresponding fear among Israelis that in a similar crisis, at some future date, the decision might go the other way. The only real possibility of the destruction of Israel would be in a situation where the Arabs enjoy Russian support and Israel does not get American support. Some Arabs feel that in these circumstances they could destroy Israel by military action; others that they could achieve the same result over a longer period without a military victory, by a process of economic and political attrition. The separation of the United States from Israel has naturally become a major objective of Arab policy, to which great efforts are directed. The more they are successful or believe themselves to be successful in achieving this objective, the less prospect there is of a peaceful settlement and, indeed, the less interest there is in seeking one.

A third lesson which the war and its diplomatic aftermath taught the Arabs was that striking the first blow brings considerable military advantages and no corresponding political disadvantages. The effects of this lesson on others have been seen in the Cyprus problem. They will certainly continue to affect both Israelis and Arabs—and probably others—in their judgments on war and peace.

IN CONSIDERING the possible development of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the first question to be asked and answered is—what is the issue? Is it the existence of Israel or the size of Israel? If the issue is still, as it has for so long been,

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the existence of Israel, then obviously no settlement, no compromise, no discussion even can take place, since there is nothing to discuss. There is no compromise between existing and not existing; if that is the issue, each side will seek to secure the best position, diplomatic and above all military, for the inevitable conflict or conflicts that must ensue.

If, however, the issue is no longer the existence but the size of the state of Israel, then a first and important step has been taken toward the normalization of the conflict and thus, more distantly, toward its solution. One cannot negotiate over the existence of Israel; one can, however, negotiate over the size of Israel, and the best hope, indeed an essential prerequisite for progress toward peace, is a clear recognition by all interested parties that such a change has taken place.

Has it? There is some evidence in the form of Arab indications of readiness to recognize Israel. The Israelis, however, point out that these indications are usually for external consumption only and are given little if any prominence in domestic statements. These indeed generally tend to go in the other direction. Israeli suspicions were heightened by the espousal of the PLO and therefore of the PLO program for the solution of the Palestine problem by the Arab leaders in their summit conference in Rabat in October 1974. These suspicions find confirmation in the continued use of the formula "restoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinians," an expression which for the PLO, and therefore presumably for those who support the PLO, means the liquidation of the Israeli state and society. Further proof of these intentions is seen in the stepped-up campaign of the Arab states against Israel at the United Nations and its various agencies, as well as by means of the boycott. The Arabs have been greatly encouraged and the Israelis correspondingly alarmed by the large measure of acquiescence and even support which the Arab states have received from other quarters in these campaigns against Israel. The exclusion of Israel from one body after another, the denunciation of Israel and of Zionism in one forum after another, are seen as stages in the delegitimization of the Jewish state, and thus as a step toward its ultimate destruction.

At first sight, there seems little reason why the Arab states should incline toward peace. They have scored some military and very considerable political successes. They have won respect and support internationally. They now dispose of immensely powerful weapons through oil and through the money which oil has brought them. They can always count on Soviet help against Israel, and have now found ways to mobilize the Afro-Asian bloc, previously divided, on their side. They have virtually broken European support for Israel and have made significant inroads into American support. Why then should they now be more disposed to recognize Israel and negotiate with it than they were at a time when they had none of these advantages?

The prospect for peace would thus seem to be very discouraging. Yet in spite of this, there are indications that at least Egypt and Jordan, and possibly also Syria, with Saudi encouragement, are ready for some kind of arrangement. Their main incentive for this would be a realization of the dangers which a continuation of the present state of war or tension holds for them, whether from internal social disruption or from Soviet penetration. The civil war in Lebanon in particular has been a warning to other Arab states.

The Arabs can, if they wish, continue the conflict and might eventually succeed in destroying Israel, since the Israelis are few and their friends are fickle or faraway or both. But to achieve this objective would require protracted struggle extending over decades or longer and involving a succession of wars. These wars would in themselves pose the gravest dangers to the Arabs as well as to the Israelis. The escalation of destructiveness was already clear in the war of October 1973 and would certainly continue at an accelerated pace in any future conflicts, possibly culminating in a nuclear holocaust. Even without this, such a process would wreck the economies of the Arab countries, poison their public life, delay or prevent their economic development, and, worst of all, expose them to a far greater danger than Israel could in any circumstances possibly offer—the danger that in trying to recover Palestine they might lose Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and the rest, and become vassals or subjects of the one great power that might be willing to encourage or help them in their aim. Even without any deliberate decision or action on the part of the Soviet Union, this would be the virtually inevitable result of a continuance of the struggle with Soviet support.

UNTIL the war in October 1973, there was no possibility of negotiation at all. Since that war, there have been signs that such a possibility exists, though it is by no means clear how such negotiations would be arranged—in what framework, about what issues, even with what participants. Whatever the pattern and procedure, however, negotiations must deal with three topics.

Recognition. The Arab refusal to recognize the Jewish state or meet with its representatives did not begin with the 1967 war and the consequent occupation of Arab territories. It dates back to the foundation of the state of Israel, and even beyond that to the period of the British Mandate, when the Palestinian Arab leadership refused at all times to enter into any kind of dialogue or discussion with the Jewish Agency, then representing the Jewish community in Palestine and the Zionist movement. This steadfast refusal of the Arab states to talk to the Israelis has been and remains the most important single cause of Israeli concern

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about Arab ultimate intentions. Paradoxically, it may also in a sense be regarded as encouraging in that it shows the importance which the Arabs attach to this matter. If they can be persuaded to overcome their reluctance to cross this psychological barrier and to grant recognition, then such recognition would have a real value. Clearly it is not a sufficient condition of peace, but it is a necessary one.

The question of recognition falls into two parts. The first of these—the minimum token of good faith—is an Arab willingness to enter into direct discussions with Israeli representatives. The second is agreement as to the nature of the ultimate objective—namely, a signed peace and the normalization of relations. It has been objected in the past that to expect Arab acceptance of such a program is unrealistic and utopian; President Sadat, the only Arab leader who has even alluded to such a possibility, has said this must be left for a future generation—whether political, biological, or eschatological is not clear. It would, however, be equally unrealistic and utopian to expect the Israelis to withdraw to less defensible borders without at least having some assurance that they will not be called upon to defend these borders in the short run against guerrilla warfare and terrorism, in the long run against a war of annihilation. Before the 1967 war, Jordanian territory reached to thirteen miles from Tel Aviv and eleven miles from the sea, and every inhabited place in Israel was in range of Arab artillery. No Israeli government in its senses is going to give up territories in order to facilitate immediate sabotage and ultimate destruction. This, after all, is what the conflict has been about since its inception. If the threat of annihilation is real, it must be countered; if false, it must be exorcised. A real peace with normalization of relations would involve concessions by both sides but would bring advantages to both sides. It would help to allay Israeli fears about Arab intentions. At the same time, it would also provide an answer to frequently expressed Arab fears concerning Israeli expansion. It would also make it possible to deal with the two other major problems within the context of serious negotiations and effective application.

Borders. Apart from the larger question of recognition and peace, the major issue to be settled between Israel and its Arab neighbors is that of the borders. Although Israel has existed as a state since 1948, it has never had any internationally recognized frontiers, only cease-fire lines. Obviously any settlement between Israel and its Arab neighbors would have to involve agreement on the borders between them and the transformation of these into recognized international frontiers. Governments which hitherto have treated not only the Israeli-occupied territories but Israel itself as occupied Arab land would have some difficulty in accepting this view. It is, however, an essential ingredient of any peaceful settlement of the problem. The Rogers plan, echoed by subsequent American statements, envisages "minor" or "insubstantial" modifications of the 1949 cease-fire lines. President Carter has recently recognized that as long as there is no real peace, the defense of Israel against possible attack may require some form of presence beyond the frontiers, though in what form was left open. If territorial revision is explored, this could take place in several forms other than simple Soviet-style annexation or incorporation. The history of Europe and, more particularly, of the Americas provides several precedents of change by agreement. Among the possibilities are adjustment with compensation elsewhere; purchase; leases with time limits; base and/or patrol rights; demilitarized zones.

The Palestinians. Discussion of the borders in the north and south would obviously have to take place between Israel and the interested states—namely, Syria in the north and Egypt in the south. The case in the east is less clear. At one time, it was assumed that any territory evacuated by Israel would be returned to the previous ruling authority—that is, Jordan—in the same way that former Syrian territory was returned to Syria and former Egyptian territory to Egypt. The question of a Palestinian state did not arise. Although envisaged by the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947, it was explicitly rejected by both the Palestinian Arab leadership and the Arab states at that time. After a brief Egyptian experiment in 1949 with a "government of all Palestine" based in Gaza, no attempt was made to constitute a Palestinian government or entity in those parts of Palestine which were under Arab rule between 1948 and 1967.

The greater part of Mandatory Palestine not included in Israel was annexed by Jordan. Jordanian ownership of the West Bank was not, however, generally recognized either in the Arab world or elsewhere. Recently, the Jordanians themselves appear to have renounced, at least for the time being, their claim to direct sovereignty over this area. The problem here, therefore, is not merely, as in the north and south, a question of when and how and how far the Israelis should withdraw from the occupied territories. There are the further and more difficult questions—with whom do they negotiate the frontier, and to whom do they relinquish the territory on the other side of it?

Here again there are, broadly speaking, three possibilities. The first is the restoration of Jordanian sovereignty over the West Bank more or less as it existed before the 1967 war, as part of a unitary kingdom. This would seem to be virtually excluded in the present political configuration. Second is the attachment of the West Bank, possibly with the addition of the Gaza Strip, to the Jordanian monarchy, with some form of autonomy and separate legislative and other institutions.

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Such a Palestinian entity in loose association with Jordan might be ruled by the PLO or by some new force emerging from the local leadership. The third possibility is the creation of a new Palestinian state not linked with Jordan which would, almost inevitably, be governed by the PLO and with policies therefore determined by the PLO program. Such a state would have irredentist claims against Israel, the whole of which would be seen as occupied Palestine, to be liberated and incorporated in the Palestinian state. It would also have an irredentist and more particularly an ideological case against the Hashemite monarchy on the East Bank.

The position of the PLO was greatly weakened as a consequence of the Lebanese struggle. This was noticeable at the thirty-first session of the UN General Assembly, when the spokesmen of the European Economic Community and of France, Britain, and Germany all spoke on the Palestine question. While agreeing on the need to provide for the Palestinian people, all of them refrained from mentioning the PLO by name. Similar omissions were noted in the speeches of Kissinger and of Gromyko. As previously the power, so now the weakness, of the PLO received its due international recognition. Since then—as so often before—the play of inter-Arab politics has made it possible for the leaders of the PLO to recover some of their importance, and it may be that the PLO will again be able to play a role, if not in its own right, then as an instrument of the policy of one or another of the Arab states.

The claim of the PLO to "represent"—in any case a word of uncertain meaning in the Middle Eastern context—the Palestinian people has often been challenged, though apart from King Hussein no serious alternative candidate has appeared. It is clear that some provision must be made for Palestinian representation and participation in whatever discussions may take place, though it is uncertain what would be the most effective way to do this. The main point which should determine the choice is the purpose of the negotiation. If the purpose of negotiations is to reach agreement and achieve peace, then participation must be limited to those who, with whatever reservations, share these objectives—who have the desire to achieve a solution, and the ability to give it effect. Failure can be insured by including those for whom negotiation is not a path to peace but another battlefield in a war to the death.

A PEACE settlement would involve risks for the signatories on both sides: for the Arabs that they would be swept aside by more radical leaders or, if the peace held, that they would be left to face the undivided and undeflected anger of their own peoples; for the Israelis, that they might make vital strategic concessions only to find that the Arab interlocutor has either changed his mind or been replaced.

Both the Israelis and the Arabs have their internal political problems; both will find it hard to make substantial political sacrifices which would be severely attacked at home in return for what at first must be hypothetical gains. It is here that the United States would best be able to play a role by insuring that the risk is not excessive and the counterpart adequate.

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How Important Is Soviet Dissent?

Valery Chalidze

WESTERN experts and journalists have oscillated between two extremes in their estimates of the scope of dissent and of the human-rights movement in the USSR. When that movement first began to assert itself with a voice both loud and clear, there was a tendency to regard it as a powerful social force capable of influencing the development of Soviet policies. This evaluation was perhaps distorted by the bias of many Russian émigré experts. All political émigrés are prone to hasty judgments, intended to convince the world that their native country's disagreeable regime is on the verge of collapse. For that matter, in the early 70's I was among those who tried to convey to Western correspondents the false impression that dissent, and the human-rights movement in particular, was already a tangible political force.

Now that the number of activists in the movement has ceased to grow, and, with arrests and expulsions, has actually decreased, Western experts have swung to the opposite extreme. Today they often assume that the dissent movement is simply not a social factor to be given any weight at all in political prognoses.

This judgment is mistaken on the basis of numbers alone. The activists in the movement whose names are known are not the *only* dissenters. To the contrary, they are a tiny minority of the dissenters—a minority daring enough to advertise their dissent. Many less daring Soviet officials and members of the intelligentsia are still sufficiently bold to manifest their dissent—perhaps only in small ways, but consistently—in their work. And there are many others, overtly obedient on their jobs, whose anti-regime sentiments rise to the surface when an opportunity comes along or exert a subconscious influence on their official activity. The authorities apparently realize how numerous such potential "oppositionists" are; ideological campaigns condemning Zionists or denouncing Andrei Sakharov are designed to identify these ideologically "unstable" elements.

It is impossible to gauge the number of ideologically motivated intellectuals or officials who oppose the regime; many persons believe that in the major cities of the USSR, it includes almost all of the intelligentsia. This, however, even if it is not an exaggeration, may be due to the vagueness of the notion of "opposition"—that is, to the fact that all intellectuals are skeptical of current party slogans in varying degrees. Clearly it is not productive to stretch the concept of ideological opposition to these lengths, but we do know—and I base this on the reports of more recent émigrés as well as on my own experience—that the well-known dissident writers are rarely expressing their own ideas and thoughts only. Their *samizdat* essays result from the reworking and assimilating of views current in the authors' social milieu. Such influence is especially apparent in the work of two of the best-known such authors, Roy Medvedev and Andrei Sakharov (both of whom are still in the USSR).*

The works of Roy Medvedev are especially well worth studying because they reflect the opinions and doubts current among liberally-inclined party officials.† (This observation in no way diminishes Medvedev's importance as a writer.) They are valuable also because they are written in a specifically Soviet idiom more accessible to party officials than the idiom of the intelligentsia. Roy Medvedev appears to be closely associated with the old Bolsheviks and their families. Some old Bolsheviks still remember the party debates of the 20's; for many, their confinement in Stalin's labor camps was an introduction to dissent, and for almost all, the period of Khrushchev's reforms stimulated a search for ways of improving party theory and practice.

VALERY CHALIDZE, the well-known Soviet dissident now living in New York, is the author of *To Defend These Rights* and the forthcoming *Criminal Russia: A Study of Crime in the Soviet Union* (Random House). The present essay was translated from the Russian by GUY DANIELS. Copyright © 1977 by Valery Chalidze.

* Works by other noted *samizdat* authors (Peter Grigorenko, Yuri Orlov, Valentin Turchin, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Amalrik, Vladimir Bukovsky, Igor Shafarevich) also reflect widespread attitudes; this, however, does not apply to the "legalists" (such as Alexander Volpin, Andrei Tverdokhlebov, and myself) who have restricted themselves to the analysis of Soviet and international law.

† *Let History Judge* (Knopf, 1971); *On Socialist Democracy* (Knopf, 1976); *Khrushchev: The Years in Power* (with Zhores Medvedev, Columbia University Press, 1976).

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Although this group is not in power, it serves as a reservoir of party dissent and feeds certain doubts into the minds of the ruling party bureaucracy.

The views advanced by Andrei Sakharov in his book, *My Country and the World*,* are, I believe, more compatible with the values of European civilization. This makes it all the more pleasant to realize that Sakharov's ideas are not the views of an isolated individual. Again, this in no way diminishes Sakharov's importance, and I am quite sure that he himself would confirm that his statements are a thoughtful, creative elaboration of ideas current in those social circles familiar to him: above all, in the milieu of scientists and engineers working at research institutes. (In recent years, Sakharov has also been influenced by his association with more open dissenters.) Scientists and research engineers are among the freest and boldest thinkers in Soviet society, and it is not surprising that many well-known activists of the dissident movement come from that milieu. We should remember, moreover, that we know the names only of those who have announced their dissent; the majority of scientists who are ideological "oppositionists" do not consider it necessary to advertise the fact publicly. Their reticence is understandable if one bears in mind the conditions obtaining in the Soviet Union and the psychology of scientists for whom their work represents a higher value than open discussion of social questions. Indeed, such covert dissenters often make it a point to proclaim publicly their loyalty to party ideology. It is known that some scientists who took part in the campaign denouncing Sakharov in fact sympathize with his activity.

In this article I am concerned chiefly with the "liberal-democratic" dissenters and those Communist dissenters who advocate "socialist democracy." Contemporary Russian political dissent does include other schools of thought, including the religious-political and the national-religious. By these rather vague terms I have in mind theories advocating the political reconstruction of Russia using either Orthodox Christianity, or a synthesis of religious and nationalist ideas, as a state ideology† These schools of thought are of some significance in analyzing social movements in present-day Russia, and they constitute an important factor in the country's cultural and spiritual development. But the Orthodox and nationalist-religious trends have had almost no effect on those social strata in a position to influence political life, and they are not sufficiently widespread to become a political factor through sheer weight of numbers. I should, however, at least mention nationalist trends in the party apparatus, although little is known about this phenomenon. This brand of dissent is or could become a serious political factor.

Is it reasonable, in gauging the extent of ideological opposition, to take into account covert dissent? I think it is. Covert dissent, the widespread if unexpressed sympathy for the bold gestures of the few overt dissidents, is a real factor in the life of the society.

The present situation is rather paradoxical. According to many reports, the working day at Soviet scientific or cultural institutes often begins with some staff members discussing the latest items heard on the BBC or the Voice of America, including news about dissidents (although the BBC and the Voice of America rarely report on the dissidents). If, however, these same staff members are summoned to a meeting, they will vote to condemn the BBC, the Voice of America, and the dissidents. Such hypocrisy represents the minimum ideological loyalty required by the authorities, who realize it is a minimum and also realize that covert ideological dissent cannot help but affect the daily activity of employees and even officials.

The prospect for the growth of covert dissent in Soviet society is a matter subject to debate. I myself am not generally inclined to optimism, but I believe that skepticism or ideological "oppositionist" sentiment has already reached the point where the process of intellectual emancipation is probably irreversible.

How high up has covert dissent spread? It is no secret that persons sympathetic to the dissidents are to be found at the very summit of the Soviet scientific hierarchy. As for the party, naturally control is stricter there and we know little about higher party circles. But the authorities are better informed about the potential for dissent there too, and we can draw indirect conclusions from the detailed ideological scrutiny to which candidates for top posts are subjected. The fact that certain documents and other information available only to highly placed persons sometimes find their way into *samizdat* also enables us to draw certain conclusions as to the upward spread of active, if covert, dissent. I shall return to this subject later.

In the late 60's some prominent figures in Soviet culture were bold enough to sign petitions in defense of human rights. Their names are a matter of record, but such actions are not a sure indication of a significant degree of dissent. Again, in certain cases the decent behavior of a highly placed person gives us (and the authorities!) reason to suspect him of moral, if not political, opposition to the regime. (An example would be a prominent personality refusing to take part in a campaign to denounce Sakharov.) Finally, there is reason to suppose that "oppositionist" sentiments are also harbored by people whose names we do not even suspect. In order to guard his position, a highly placed covert dissident must be extremely vigilant. Does such covert dissidence have any effect on a person's work? Perhaps no immediate effect, but the existence of "oppositionist" senti-

* Knopf, 1975. See also *Sakharov Speaks* (Knopf, 1974).

† See, for example, Alexander Solzhenitsyn et al., *From Under the Rubble* (Little, Brown, 1975) and Solzhenitsyn's *Letter to the Soviet Leaders* (Harper & Row, 1974).

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ments in the upper reaches of the Soviet hierarchy nevertheless remains significant.

II

Apart from the issue of the *extent* of dissent, the Soviet dissident movement—and I specifically include the human-rights movement—has contributed over the past decade to transforming the Soviet Union into a somewhat more open society. That is to say, the dissident movement has helped to bring about the disclosure of important information that had been concealed by the authorities both from Soviet society and from the rest of the world, and Soviet citizens have been able to form a more accurate idea of life in the West than can be gained from Soviet newspapers. In a comparatively brief period, we have witnessed the destruction of a strong Soviet tradition: total silence concerning political trials, labor camps, and prisons. Many instances of anti-religious persecution, of ethnic discrimination, and a good deal else, have been publicized. All this the authorities had carefully concealed from Soviet society and especially from its international partners; and the regime's policies were built on the assumption that what had been concealed would never be publicized.

I am convinced that these continuing disclosures, contrary to the wishes of the regime, constitute an important political factor which introduces an element of uncertainty into policy planning. This does not mean that the authorities will immediately desist from those shameful types of persecution which were formerly conducted in secret. Of course not. The authorities are attempting to continue such persecutions despite the risk of exposure. They are seeking new ways of covering them up. But they cannot remain entirely indifferent to the fact of public exposure. The systematic disclosure of numerous human-rights violations is already a fact of life.

The authorities are particularly sensitive to disclosure of Soviet violations of international humanitarian accords. It may well be that the activity of Soviet dissenters in monitoring the fulfillment of international agreements is causing difficulties not just for the Soviet authorities but also for those international organizations which have got used to accepting comforting assurances from official Soviet representatives as to how splendidly the Soviet Union has fulfilled its international obligations. Gradually, however, not just the Soviet authorities but such international organizations, as well, will have to take public sources of information into account. Although it is difficult to hope for initiative in this respect from international organizations whose members are sovereign states, Western public opinion may have some effect.

Members of the human-rights movement have given serious attention to publicizing information that had been unlawfully concealed. The editors of the Moscow *Chronicle of Current Events** have earned a reputation for accurate reporting. Recently, the Helsinki Watch Group in the USSR, headed by the physicist, Yuri Orlov, has gathered detailed information on Soviet compliance with and violations of the Helsinki accords. The group has sent seventeen reports to the participating states proposing further study of alleged violations. Since February, Orlov, Alexander Ginzburg, Mikola Rudenko, and other members of this group have been arrested by the Soviet authorities. Only the future will show what use the states signatory to the Helsinki accords will make of the information contained in the Watch Group's detailed reports. The Soviet authorities' reaction indicates that they are distinctly unhappy that this group exists.

Perhaps this is the place to emphasize the scrupulous honesty observed by members of the movement in publishing information on human-rights violations in the USSR. I realize that in the late 60's certain activists issued statements which, although based on actual violations of human rights by the authorities, contained emotional judgments and some exaggerations. Rather quickly, however, the movement developed a tradition of reporting violations accurately and objectively. To a great extent, the development of this style was fostered by the *Chronicle of Current Events*, which enjoys deserved prestige as an accurate and responsible source. (Forty-three issues of the *Chronicle* have reached the West since April 1968.) One must bear in mind the difficulties involved in gathering information in the USSR, and the possibility of error—especially when collecting information from distant provinces. Such errors have been corrected by the *Chronicle* whenever possible, and the editors indicate when information has not been verified. At times the *Chronicle* has delayed the publication of important information in order to check it. It may seem paradoxical, but the information supplied by the *Chronicle*'s anonymous editorial board, which has never been formally organized, and which is subject to change when editors are arrested or exiled, has proved to be much more reliable than the sworn testimony of some recent émigrés who never took part in the human-rights movement and hence never learned its traditions.

Over the years the members of the human-rights movement have devoted serious attention to the ethical aspect of their work. There are no grounds for doubting the truthfulness of the well-known activists in the movement, who by a sad twist of fate are often charged with slander, even when their statements are supported by documentary

* A *samizdat* journal, founded by Natasha Gorbanevskaya, which has circulated in the Soviet Union since 1968. It is translated and published in the West by Amnesty International.

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evidence. Anyone skeptical about reported violations of human rights in the USSR should understand that much information on this subject has been gathered and verified by persons of integrity —persons who are unwilling to distort the facts, even for the sake of good ends.

It is not just the famous dissidents who gather and process information. Many people help in this work; and sometimes we learn their names from new arrests. Such informants include not only convicts in prisons and camps and intellectuals occupying humble places in the hierarchy. As I noted before, certain interesting documents available only to trusted officials have shown up in *samizdat*. These include directives from the Administration for Safeguarding Government Secrets (the official organ of censorship) concerning the seizing or burning of books and reports on closed conferences and lectures for high officials.

By studying the information published in *samizdat*, one can form some idea of the geographic distribution of informants on human-rights violations. It is not difficult to see that most "information monitoring" takes place in the larger cities of European Russia and the Ukraine, in the Baltic republics, and to a lesser degree in Georgia. Apparently the Soviet authorities have abandoned their hopes of stopping the flow of information from Moscow to foreign countries (although they are still combating it), and are exerting greater efforts to cut off the flow of information from the provinces to Moscow (and the reverse flow of *samizdat* from Moscow to the provinces). There are frequent reports of personal searches at airports and railroad stations when the authorities suspect a provincial traveler of being in contact with dissidents.

One indication that the authorities are disturbed by this geographical expansion of "oppositionist" sentiment is the fact that in the provinces, dissidents still sometimes suffer harsh repressions on slight charges—charges which in Moscow today do not entail arrest.* Throwing more light on the situation in the provinces is very important in working toward an open society in the Soviet Union. Foreign correspondents and ambassadors are accredited to Moscow; and for many years the Soviet authorities have worked to create showcase conditions in Moscow (and to a lesser extent in Leningrad). This has been done on the assumption that even regional centers are usually concealed from foreign eyes. But today, thanks to the growing public "information monitoring" of the human-rights movement, coupled with greater freedom of movement for foreign correspondents, the provinces of the USSR are being opened up for limited examination by outsiders.

The fact that Soviet society is being increasingly opened to scrutiny by outsiders is only half the story. The dissident movement is also making information about the outside world more available to interested Soviet citizens—helping to remove the taboo against the outside world that has been implanted in the psychology of Soviet citizens.

A key aspect of this entire process is the gradual acceptance by the Soviet public of the idea that one can, in principle, emigrate from the Soviet Union; that one can, often with impunity, declare one's intention to emigrate. For those who remember the situation in the USSR fifteen years ago, this is almost unbelievable.

Naturally the Soviet authorities are anxious to discredit the idea of emigration; since most emigrants have been Jewish, the authorities have been able to exploit popular anti-Semitic sentiments in their campaign. And yet the Jewish emigration has been of great significance in overcoming the taboo on everything pertaining to the outside world. People can now see with their own eyes human beings who soon will live in a totally different world where they will be *foreigners*. I cannot exaggerate the psychological impact of this experience, so unusual for a Soviet citizen.

I believe the human-rights movement is largely responsible for compelling the Soviet authorities gradually to increase the number of exit visas granted to Jews and, even more fundamental, to admit the existence of the emigration problem publicly, to admit to the Soviet newspaper reader that a certain element of the population wants to leave such an ideal society and go elsewhere. I do not wish to exaggerate, but I am convinced that the public struggle for emigration launched by Soviet Jews in 1971 could not have taken place if the dissidents had not previously set an example with their public discussion of social problems. At the time, I was close to the Jewish movement, and I can testify to the importance of the dissident movement as a precedent for the Jewish activists. Since then, dissidents have provided similar support for the emigration movement of Soviet ethnic Germans.

As it has turned out, many active dissidents have themselves left the Soviet Union, either having been expelled or having agreed to emigrate as an alternative to arrest and imprisonment. One result of this new emigration has been a major expansion in the quantity of information exchanged between Soviet dissenters and their compatriots abroad. Whatever one's opinion of the political culture of Russian émigrés, people in the Soviet Union now realize that an uncensored Russian culture exists in exile. In Russia itself, the attitude toward the Soviet political émigrés is chang-

* A separate question that I have not discussed here is the activity of nationalist groups in the republics: e.g., in the Ukraine, the Baltic republics, and Armenia. In some cases links exist between the moderate nationalist groups and the Moscow dissidents. Experience shows that nationalist movements which are not in political opposition to the regime, such as the Crimean Tatar and Jewish movements, can develop comparatively quickly and involve large numbers of people.

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ing. Today, in Russian-language newspapers printed abroad, you occasionally see a letter to the editor, usually anonymous, from a resident of the USSR. Such a thing was unheard of ten years ago.

Another step in opening up Soviet society which owes much to the boldness of the dissenters is the increasing frequency of non-official contact between Soviet citizens and foreigners. Despite the regime's opposition, such contacts continue to expand.

It can be said without exaggeration that if an ordinary citizen has an acquaintance who has an acquaintance who knows a person who has befriended a foreigner, that fact in itself produces a psychological shift toward emancipation from an ancient taboo.

It is interesting that among the less intimidated strata of Soviet society, knowing a foreigner or an overt dissident, or possessing a book or information from the West, is a status symbol—something which others may secretly envy, and an occasion for boasting. This is one reason why well-known dissidents in Russia are often pestered simply for the sake of making their acquaintance.

The distribution of Russian-language books published in the West also contributed to opening up Soviet society. The availability of such literature is growing, although slowly. Like *samizdat*, imported books are gradually revealing to readers a whole world of ideas previously concealed by the Soviet censors. The great demand in the USSR for Russian-language books from the West is clear from the prices such books command on the black market. For the most popular works—books by Osip Mandelstam, Anna Akhmatova, or Alexander Solzhenitsyn—the price may exceed 100 rubles per copy, one month's pay for a young scientist. It is common to lend an acquaintance a book for one night. Thanks to such rapid turnover, a book gains many readers in a brief time. Evenings devoted to group readings have also become an established custom among the intelligentsia. This is especially convenient when a book has begun to fall apart. Readers also photocopy Russian books from the West, and (less often) retype them.

Finally, I should note that some progress in opening up Soviet society might have been made even without an active dissident movement, since the Soviet authorities are themselves moderately stepping up economic and cultural exchanges with the West. But I am convinced that in the absence of the dissident movement this process would have developed at a slower pace, and it would have remained under stricter ideological control.

III

The human-rights movement has been markedly important in developing a sense of law in the Soviet Union. One must have a good notion of the atmosphere in which Soviet people are brought up—an atmosphere which completely distorts the concepts of civil rights—before one can fully appreciate what members of the movement are doing: showing by their own example that one can read the laws as they are written and not necessarily as they are interpreted by one's superiors, showing that the defense of an individual's rights by the state is not a praiseworthy act of kindness but an obligation.

Members of the movement base their own demands, and their criticism of the authorities' actions, primarily on Soviet laws and the international obligations of the USSR. I can remember the time when few Soviet citizens had any notion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And I can remember the time when the term "human rights" was simply not a part of the Soviet vocabulary. What the Soviet people were told was that the USSR had the best-secured *workers'* rights in the world, with the concept of workers' rights subsuming such rights as the right to work, to an education, and to medical care. Even those few civil rights which were guaranteed by the Constitution were rarely mentioned, since the authorities did not consider it desirable to emphasize them.

But today, thanks to the human-rights movement, it is the concept of *human* rights that has entered usage, at any rate among the intelligentsia. And even Soviet newspapers find it necessary to use this term, although they try to endow it with a meaning that serves their own purposes. But what matters is that this concept—which speaks for itself—is being used. Thanks to the human-rights movement, the public's awareness of international human-rights conventions has increased greatly, as has the readiness to refer to them. When we were just beginning to publicize, in *samizdat*, the UN Covenants on Human Rights (before their ratification by the USSR), some dissenters regarded those documents as empty verbiage and useless propaganda. But now I sometimes receive appeals from remote provinces citing the Covenants. I consider this a major stride in the evolution of a sense of law.

The dissenters' experiments in founding public associations not controlled by the party and the state are of similar importance; e.g., the Moscow Human Rights Committee, the Amnesty International group, and the Helsinki Watch Group. Such activity has received support from international non-governmental organizations.

The point has not been reached where people can effectively defend their rights with the assistance of the human-rights movement. But the point *has* been reached where people are beginning to realize which of their rights should be defended by the state, and which of their rights are being violated. This is important, and it undoubtedly restrains the Soviet authorities from many violations of rights.

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IV

THE dissident movement has not elaborated any original political theories. The average level of *samizdat* writing on political topics is unsophisticated by modern standards. This is understandable, since *samizdat* authors are not in a position to know the state of political science in the outside world. (Few contemporary foreign books on the social sciences reach the USSR, and not very many Soviet citizens can read foreign languages.) Nonetheless, many *samizdat* writers attempt a serious analysis of the current political situation, and formulate their suggestions accordingly. Some suggestions deserve serious study, especially when advanced by authors who have studied a problem in depth—Andrei Sakharov's proposals on disarmament are a case in point.

In *samizdat* political literature, criticism of the existing situation predominates. That criticism is often interesting—or at any rate, informative—because of the principles on which it is based. The program set forth by the liberal-democratic writers usually boils down to an affirmation of the desirability of gradual reforms along the lines of those introduced during the Khrushchev era. Authors like Roy Medvedev stress the possibility of democratic reforms within the framework of the present Communist system of government, while others (Andrei Sakharov, Valentin Turchin, Yuri Orlov) discuss to what extent hopes for such reforms are compatible with what in Russia is called socialism. Other schools of thought have not so far offered anything that can be described as substantial political-science research or a feasible political alternative. Certain authors, as noted earlier, have recommended that Russia be restructured using religion or nationalism as a state ideology. Their theories are interesting, but in reading such articles one gets the impression that the authors' familiarity with political science is limited to works of the 19th or early 20th century.*

Suggestions by *samizdat* authors for the development of the legal system are more specific, since the topic itself is better defined. The main thrust of these suggestions is that Soviet authorities should observe existing Soviet laws and gradually bring those laws into conformity with international obligations and the generally accepted ideas of modern civilization. The insistence upon strict compliance with the procedural—in addition to the substantive—guarantees of the law is of crucial importance in developing a sense of law in Russia.

Some of these suggestions would be difficult for the Soviet authorities to carry out while still preserving the existing political system. But proponents of such suggestions often choose to ignore that obvious circumstance, stressing that their ideas have to do only with the legal system and not with politics. This approach may be somewhat unrealistic, but logically it is well founded. Some suggestions would be easy for the authorities to carry out (in individual cases); and if they do not adopt them, or do not adopt them promptly, it is (I suspect) for reasons of political prestige, and because they want to stress their capacity for arbitrary action.

Some changes in Soviet law appear to come as if in response to an appeal by or criticism from those dissenters whose main preoccupation is legal rights.† For example, the new regulations on the internal passport system provide for the issuance of passports to collective farmers. This followed criticism in *samizdat* of discrimination against *kolkhoz* members because, unlike urban dwellers, they were not issued passports, which in practice made it more difficult for them to exercise their right to freedom of movement. In other cases, appeals from dissenters have coincided with legislative intentions, as has become evident after the fact—for instance, in the matter of the Soviet ratification of the Covenants on Human Rights, the Universal Copyright Convention, and the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Such coincidences do not, however, prove that the legislators paid heed to advice from the dissenters—especially since the laws adopted frequently differ in substantive provisions from the proposals of the *samizdat* authors.

I should note, in conclusion, that the advocacy of reforms by dissenters usually has nothing revolutionary about it. To the contrary, most authors of such suggestions stress their leanings toward gradualism, and their understanding that even with the best of intentions, it is impossible to change everything at once.

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* There is little likelihood that in the near future *samizdat* authors will be able to read more of the important political-science works by Western authors. Russian publishing houses in the West do not have the resources to undertake such a program of enlightenment. In Europe, several Russian-language publishers issue reasonable quantities of imaginative literature, together with books on religious education and on Russian religious philosophy. In the U.S., there are two active publishers of books in Russian: Ardis Press, which specializes in imaginative literature, and Khronika Press, which concentrates on publications on human rights in the USSR, and also prints political works of a liberal-democratic persuasion, chiefly from *samizdat*.

† See Valery Chalidze, *To Defend These Rights* (Random House, 1974).

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The Sanctification of Literature

Harold Fisch

> The great majority of the irreligious are not liberated from religious behavior, from theologies, and mythologies. They sometimes stagger under a whole magico-religious paraphernalia, which, however, has degenerated to the point of caricature and hence is hard to recognize for what it is.
>
> —Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*

I SOMETIMES find myself wondering at which point in the history of modernity secular literature, in particular poetry, became elevated into the realm of sanctity. Nathan A. Scott, Jr., writes (in *The Wild Prayer of Longing*) that it is the poet—he means Theodore Roethke—who provides a new possibility of "conceiving the world to be a truly sacramental reality." Heidegger had said the same of Hölderlin: his poetry was "a temple without a shrine" and his mission was "to name the holy." Speaking of the "transcendent scene" enacted between Cordelia and King Lear in the fourth act of Shakespeare's play, G. Wilson Knight adds, "From the travail of nature the immortal thing is born; time has given birth to that which is timeless." We recall Carlyle's claim that Shakespeare was the priest of "the Universal Church of the Future and of all times." These are particularly rapturous comments, but more sober critics often say the same kind of thing. James Baird (in *Ishmael*) tells us that *Moby Dick* is "the supreme example of the artistic creator engaged in the act of making new symbols to replace the 'lost' symbols of Protestant Christianity."

The watershed is, I suppose, Matthew Arnold's 1880 essay, "The Study of Poetry." There poetry is formally invested with religious honors and responsibilities. "The future of poetry," Arnold declares, "is immense, because in poetry where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay." The biblical language in the passage is notable. Arnold, a habitual self-quoter, is here repeating something he had written earlier (in an introduction to a popular work titled *The Hundred Greatest Men*). But Arnold is not the only one who found the sentence worth repeating. It has been echoed by critics again and again over the years and finally enshrined as the epigraph to I. A. Richards's *Science and Poetry* (1926), one of the seminal works of the New Criticism. Richards shows little interest in the transcendental as such, but in a world given over to science and positivism, poetry is for him the respository of all those psychological needs and interests which had once been expressed by such terms as soul, spirit, morality, God, and the rest. "'Tradition," he writes, "is weakening." Poetry is what will "take the place of the old order." Arnold in "The Study of Poetry" had spoken more explicitly of the new *religious* task of poetry:

> More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.

Lionel Trilling, commenting on these words of Arnold, remarks that "never, perhaps, has such a tremendous burden been placed on secular poetry," and he goes on to express a number of reservations. But not everyone has been so cautious.

For close on a hundred years, poets, critics, and educators have consciously or unconsciously been purveying this doctrine. It is part of the grand secular religion of the 19th century, of a piece with Gothic railway stations and townhalls with dreaming spires. But while fashions in building have changed, the underlying assumption about the sacred task of poetry has remained. In *Structuralist Poetics,* an important recent book, Jonathan Culler wistfully remarks that "if we did not revere the literary work quite so much we might enjoy it rather more." Matthew Arnold had his doubts about Chaucer who, he thought, lacked "high seriousness." He need not have worried. Through the work of the typologists and the archetypologists, *The Canterbury Tales* have been duly beatified. "The Miller's Tale," hitherto thought of as a brilliant and bawdy fabliau, is now revered as a sacred text containing mysterious intimations of the Trinity, the Christian doctrine of salvation, and other high matters.

Trilling's question is therefore in place. Can

HAROLD FISCH, professor of English at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, is the author of *Jerusalem and Albion, The Dual Image, Hamlet and the Word: The Covenant Pattern in Shakespeare, S. Y. Agnon,* and other works.

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such a tremendous burden be placed on secular poetry? Or is it not apparent that the assumption that the poet is a holy man and the text a sacred text creates expectations of infallibility that a normal poetic text is not meant to sustain? Milton, I suppose, was the first to apply the Puritan doctrine of election and special calling to the poet (meaning himself) and to claim that, like Isaiah, his lips had been touched by the Seraphim with sacred fire from the altar. But he was near enough to the source to make such claims seem natural. His writings do have a biblical resonance.* Blake too is near the source. He tells us in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that he dined and exchanged notes with the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel; and in fact his "Jerusalem" lyric has become a hymn of the Church. But what about *Moby Dick*, "The Miller's Tale," *Ulysses*, and the novels of Fielding? They may have a touch of "high seriousness" but they have a great deal of low seriousness as well. Can those texts sustain the burden of holiness?

It is not only a matter of vatic poets, but of vatic critics also. In fact the two go together. Some recent criticism of Blake is really a response to his poetry viewed as revelation. It accords to its "apocalyptic humanism" an absoluteness of faith which does not fall far short of Blake's own. We are invited to view his work as a coherent, saving vision. Similarly, Heidegger's sense of himself as a critic is not so very different from Hölderlin's sense of himself as a poet. The inspired interpreter stands on a mountain apart (like Moses receiving the tablets) in profound communication with the poet.

Who then authorizes the vatic critic? Presumably it is something like the work of the "holy spirit" in Protestant theology. The internal evidence of the spirit responds to the spirit speaking to us from the text:

> We feel a divine energy living and breathing in it—an energy by which we are drawn and animated to obey it, willingly indeed and knowingly, but more vividly and effectually than could be done by human will and knowledge.

This is John Calvin speaking of the Holy Scriptures. But it is not so very different from Wallace Stevens speaking of the "supreme fictions" whereby the poet creates the world. "Poetry is a revelation in words by means of the words." Receiving these words in wonder and thankfulness, we are helped to live our lives. This is close to modern critical orthodoxy. It is not the only approach to poetry possible today (there are also those who in reaction to this emphasize the absurdity and meaninglessness of poetic fictions or who invite us to see painting as merely the art of doodling), but it is still one of the most respected approaches. For Harold Bloom, the poetry of Blake and Wordsworth is truly a form of revelation: "Like Abraham, Wordsworth is the patriarch of a Covenant, made in the latter case between phenomenal appearance and the human heart." The biblical analogy, constant in Bloom's criticism, is not intended to give an air of authority to the poets he deals with by suggesting that they echo some earlier, more authentic mode of revelation; he suggests, rather, that in Wordsworth or Blake the Hebrew and Christian myths attain for the first time their fullness of expression. The kingdom is here, so to speak, fulfilled. One senses something similar in the work of Northrop Frye. *The Anatomy of Criticism* is in the tradition of dogmatic theology, except that the field surveyed is now that of "all literature," sacred and secular alike.

This stance, which is implicit in so much modern criticism, involves two major problems which I believe have not yet found their solution. The first is the problem of the canon. Who determines which texts are sacred? The sacred texts of the Church were given. Calvin did not have to feel around with a Geiger counter to find where the divine energy lived and breathed. It was of the nature of sacred texts to have divine energy in them. It is not the critic who establishes this—he merely releases the significance through interpretations, making manifest what is already known to be there. The new critic of the new secular revelation, on the other hand, does not only have this particular hermeneutic task, he also must through his rhetoric persuade us that the work of Hölderlin, or Wordsworth, or Blake belongs to the canon; there are other critics who will seek to persuade us otherwise.

But in the absence of any external authority, are we not inevitably forced back upon a purely individual judgment and a purely subjective preference? Arnold addressed himself precisely to this problem. For him, the true critic is the man who, above all, manages to escape the "personal estimate." He is the canonizer. The critic does not express likes and dislikes: he determines, through his moral authority, what is a "classic" and what is not a "classic." This is in a sense the primary function of the critic: he decides what is the best that has been thought and said in the world and thereby defines the borders of the new secular scriptures.

It is an audacious claim, and today most of us would smile at it, yet it is amazing how long and how powerfully Arnold's judgments have acted on the reading public. Arnold decided that Wordsworth was a primary source of divine energy; but

* I recall as a boy in Sheffield hearing from a local streetcar driver—a devout ex-Presbyterian who had passed through Unitarianism to the religion of humanity—that he met regularly with a group of like-minded workingmen on a Sunday morning to read aloud a book or two of *Paradise Lost*. The great sonorous lines of Milton evidently consoled and sustained them in just the way that Arnold had said. There must be worse ways of spending Sunday morning in a world where the official symbols and texts of the Church no longer hold sway.

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his writings were not *all* sacred, and so Arnold set about to separate the wheat from the chaff. His anthology of Wordsworth's poetry is still the basic "canonical" text of that poet. Moving with a boldness which has never been surpassed through the whole body of English literature, he decided that Shakespeare and Milton are "poetical classics"; Dryden and Pope are not; Gray is a little bit like the books of Ezra and Nehemiah—"he is the scantiest and frailest of our classics, but he is a classic." Burns, like Chaucer, just sadly misses inclusion. They must both be relegated to the Apocrypha. We are to read them, of course, but only, so Arnold tells us, to help us admire by contrast the accent of high seriousness in the true classics.

Arnold is somewhat like the rabbis in the Talmud trying to decide whether Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs "render the hands unclean" (a curious regulation intended to protect sacred scrolls from damage). As a matter of fact they were more hesitant about some of their decisions than Arnold was about his. He had an infallible means of testing the authentic classic: his so-called "touchstones," a dozen or so passages of incontestable excellence drawn from the Greek, Italian, and English poets. Apply these lines to any new text that comes your way—rather in the manner of a tuning-fork—and you will discover "infallibly" (the word is his) whether it belongs to the category of the "truly excellent." But, alas, Arnold's touchstones are his own—unmistakably his own—they have that plangent elegiac note that he loved. "Absent thee from felicity awhile,/And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain/To tell my story"—this is Shakespeare wonderfully anticipating Arnold's "Dover Beach." It is great poetry all right, but each one of us can find his own different touchstone in *Hamlet* and with the help of it presumably construct his own canon. So where are we?

Though Arnold's great ambition to define the boundary of the truly excellent may seem to us laughably Victorian, the fact is that it is still with us. It is not so many years since F. R. Leavis in *The Great Tradition* sought to establish the canon of the English novel. He decided that only six novelists really "rendered the hands unclean." Once we approach literature with the devoutness of Leavis, to whom criticism is a strenuous scholastic exercise, the question of the canon arises inevitably. The volumes of *Scrutiny* from 1932-53 bear witness to the ongoing and unremitting endeavor to identify the saving word on which it is proper to meditate day and night. Donne and Herbert are in; Shelley is out; Tennyson scarcely exists. Though one may remember that Dr. Johnson, too, made categorical judgments, he never pretended that they were more than the preferences of a man of good sense, writing at a certain moment in cultural history and subject to certain confessed prejudices. The implicit claims of Arnold, Leavis, and Harold Bloom are different.

The second problem is bound up with the first. It is the problem of the determination of meaning. The Church not only established a canon of sacred texts, it also established a chain of authorized interpreters. For implicit in the notion of a sacred text is the conviction that it has an ongoing meaning for our lives. In fact its meaning is inexhaustible. The sacred text is one which is fluid with possibility, ever capable of being given new life and significance, by means of interpretation. The test of the new meanings is their felt relevance to the new situation. The ancient rabbis expressed this by saying that every new interpretation still to be discovered by devout scholars in times to come was literally given as part of the original revelation at Sinai. Guaranteeing this ongoing revelation in Judaism is the doctrine of an Oral Law vested in the rabbis which provides the context within which the primary, written revelation may operate. Without it, all we have is literary archeology, a text frozen in the past.

Now, modern hermeneutics takes a similar stand with regard to poetry. The theoretician Hans Georg Gadamer, for example, argues that "the winning of the true sense contained in a text or artistic work never comes to an end. It is an infinite process." The function of the interpreter is to complete the hermeneutic circle; without him there is no definable sacred core of meaning residing "objectively" within the text.* Harold Bloom makes even more radical claims for the reader. There are, it would seem, no meanings as such within the text. The meaning is a function of antithetical relations among texts and between texts and readers. The reader, or the new poet reading the old poem, is thus the crucial determinant of meaning. The original poet himself has no role. This is oddly like the notion of an Oral Law mysteriously preserving and indeed establishing meaning from age to age. We do not go to Moses to tell us what he meant in the Torah; even if he were to get through to us from the other world we would ignore him; we go to Akiba, or whoever happens at any particular moment of history to be sitting in Akiba's seat.

But is such an expanding or dynamic process, whereby new "strong readings" (as Bloom calls them) take the place of weak or superseded meanings, conceivable when there is no felt authority behind the new reading other than the intensity of conviction of a self-appointed judge and reader? As E.D. Hirsch has pointed out in relation to Gadamer's thesis, the concept of an ongoing tradition which determines meaning is untenable in a world of literary criticism which knows no "hierarchy of judges" and no "papal-like au-

* It is generally recognized that these notions originated in Bible studies. See Wallace Martin, "The Hermeneutic Circle and the Art of Interpretation," *Comparative Literature*, XXIV, p. 100.

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thority." In these circumstances, a fluid and progressive revelation of meaning means no meaning at all.

The most impressive attempt to resolve this particular difficulty is, I think, still that of T. S. Eliot in his essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1920). It is impressive for the same reason that it is, for most of us, unacceptable. "No poet, no artist of any art," he says, "has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation, is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists." The past modifies the present, and the present modifies the past. As each new work comes on the scene, "the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered." Meaning is therefore never finalized. Older passages are continually changing as we bring them into vital relation to ourselves—which is exactly what happens to the passages from earlier poets embedded in Eliot's own work; it is an exercise in ongoing reinterpretation.

We may think that this is something like the hermeneutic doctrine of Gadamer or Bloom or like the total freedom of interpretation which Jan Kott gives to the producer of a Shakespeare play—he is invited to treat the text merely as a peg on which his own new play is to hang. This, however, is not quite the case. The key words for Eliot are "order" and "tradition." He himself is an authorized reader and judge not just because he feels himself to be so, or because he has been appointed professor in some school of literature, but because he is part of what he conceives to be *the* "tradition." He invokes a pseudo-catholic notion of a church of readers and poets—an elite, existing beyond time and possessing, like the Church, a mystic and transcendent authority. "The literature of a country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order." Every reader of Eliot knows what are the constituents of that order. It is High Church, Tory, with a spicing of Dante and the classics—in fact, in spite of his disavowals, it is a very personal, indeed idiosyncratic, selection. There are no Romantics, no Milton, and few modern novelists except Fitzgerald. But for Eliot the "tradition" has a firm, objective status: it exists as surely as the Church exists. Eliot, we may say, is a "Catholic"; Gadamer and Heidegger are "Protestants"—all that they have to rely on is the internal evidence of the holy spirit. But they are at one in seeking to relate existentially to a text which is assumed to be sacred and therefore eternally significant and adaptable to changing circumstances.

What has happened is that the notion of sacrality has been absurdly misapplied to the field of secular writing. As a result, to use the words of Mircea Eliade printed at the beginning of this article, it has "degenerated to the point of caricature." Jan Kott seems to have no respect for the original text of Shakespeare. He treats it merely as a "scenario"—a focus for the exercise of the producer's art. And yet, paradoxically, his approach too is the result of regarding Shakespeare as sacred writ; it is just that the Oral Law has totally displaced the Written Law. Such shadowy power is given to the original "revelation" that it becomes in effect the father of an infinite multitude of new revelations. The same assumption can give rise to W. K. Wimsatt's very different position in *The Verbal Icon* (1954). The focus of devotion there is the poem, the whole poem, and nothing but the poem. Such insistence on the autonomy of the poem, and such faithfulness to the received text as the repository of all significance is, we may say, an example of the Written Law superseding and displacing the Oral Law. Wimsatt is a kind of Sadducee, but like Kott he grounds his doctrine in the special absoluteness of the world of art. We take our shoes from off our feet, for we stand on holy ground.

The French Symbolists are probably the most extreme examples of this attitude. In Rimbaud and Mallarmé we encounter the actual worship of the book. "Typography," we are told in one introduction to Mallarmé, "becomes a rite." Nothing of the mechanics of the page can be left to chance, since the "Book" is a "spiritual instrument." No jot or tittle indeed shall pass away from the text of the poet till all be fulfilled. This is the "magico-religious paraphernalia" of which Eliade speaks, and it still weighs down on the priests of the new secular religion of art when they believe they have emancipated themselves from the benighted world of medieval piety. The modern literary scene abounds in numerologists, hunters after *notarikons* and *gematrias,* who occupy themselves in the counting of words and lines, multiplying and dividing them in the attempt to arrive at the hidden significance of the letter. They are kabbalists of the new secular dispensation, and the esteem in which they are held in academic circles is a further sign of how much modern man still evidently requires the mystery of a sacred text. And if he can no longer find his gratification in the sacred texts of the Church or Synagogue, he will bow down elsewhere and give sacred honors to the phantoms of his own invention.

THERE is an interesting aspect of this development which has gone largely unnoticed. Ironically, at the same time as the hierophantic assumptions were gaining ground in the criticism of poetry in the 19th century, the opposite process was taking place in Bible criticism. Earlier on, as Elinor S. Shaffer has recently noted, there was a certain symbiosis of the two—"an intricate relationship between *critica sacra* and *critica profana*" in Schelling, Herder, Coleridge, and others. Their aim was to find and cultivate the common ground between poetry and the Bible, in particular a single and unifying myth of history. But as the century proceeded, we witness, if I am not mistaken, a kind of changing of the guard, a

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reciprocal transvaluation of values. The Tübingen school of Bible critics did not respond to the imaginative glow of the text, but sought to reduce it, to view it in its human, contingent character. Matthew Arnold complained of this: The basis of the Wellhausen school (still critical orthodoxy to this day) was "scientific" and historical after the manner of the German philologist Humboldt. The text for the purposes of such critics was anything but sacred.

What interests me at this moment is not the results gained by this method but rather the existential posture of the critics concerned, their situation vis-à-vis the text. They are above all at pains to distance themselves from it; their posture is *reductive*. Their object is to see the Word shorn of its aura of sanctity, to locate it in a human, historical context where it is subject to all manner of error, inaccuracy, and inconsistency. Criticism is a light which shows up whatever is human, archaic, and faulty in the mechanism of the text. Thus, Klaus Koch, in *The Growth of the Bible*, defines biblical "literary criticism" as

> the analysis of the biblical books from the standpoint of lack of continuity, duplications, inconsistencies, and different linguistic usage, with the object of discovering what the individual writers and redactors contributed to a text and also its time and place of origin.

The angle of scrutiny is historical; there is no question here of seeing the books of the Bible as "having a simultaneous existence and composing a simultaneous order"—as Eliot said of English poetry. Form-criticism, as practiced by Herman Gunkel and Sigmund Mowinckel, is informed with a keener aesthetic awareness, but here again its object is to break down the text into literary units so as to examine the particular historical setting, the so-called *Sitz im Leben* of this or that fragment of the biblical text. The ultimate aim is the reconstruction of an ancient scene—the exact opposite, we may add, of what Jan Kott seeks to do with Shakespeare.

Let me try to illustrate the different postures of the biblical critic and the literary critic in the secular field today, by focusing for a moment on two well-known passages, the ending of *King Lear* and the ending of Job.

For many generations, when the Shakespearean canon was not regarded as sacred writ, Nahum Tate's version of *King Lear* was preferred to Shakespeare's. There Cordelia does not die; she is married off to Edgar and Lear himself survives. This version held the stage from 1681 to 1823. During that period the play invariably had a happy ending. Since then the true text has been restored but it has become a less popular play on the stage. Dr. Johnson defended the Tate version. We may also note that Shakespeare's source, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*, has a happy ending and that Tolstoy preferred it to Shakespeare. He found Cordelia's murder atrocious and unnecessary.

Now I am not trying to argue that *King Lear* ought to have a happy ending; I am trying to point out the absolute and transcendent value which critics place on the ending as it is. Critical argument is totally committed to it. How perfect, how inevitable, how necessary it is. How unthinkable any other ending would be. The shocking death of Cordelia is viewed as a Platonic idea —it is laid up in heaven. It is not merely a human construction that Shakespeare tried out, but it is a final truth. If tomorrow someone working in the public-record office in London should come up with the true and original ending of *King Lear* bearing Shakespeare's undoubted autograph and containing a different outcome from the one we have, we should all begin to look rather foolish. (Such things are not inconceivable: Dickens wrote two different and opposite conclusions for *Great Expectations*.) We have simply left ourselves no line of retreat. The reasons critics have given for justifying the ending are so different as to cancel one another out. One has said that it is a Christian ending; another has said it is a logical outcome of the pagan fatalism of the play; a third has said oracularly that "the persons die into love." But all concur that the work is absolutely and inevitably right, and they say this because it is a sacred text, canonized in its transcendent nature.

Let us observe by contrast the total absence of commitment to the integrity of the text which characterizes the Bible critics of Job. A majority nowadays regards the happy ending as non-original and non-accurate. Just as Tate thought that *Lear* ought to have ended like Job, so there are Bible scholars who feel that Job ought to end like *Lear*, and they are ready with scientific tests (but also with simple prejudgments) to prove that the happy ending and also a great part of the in-between chapters are no part of the original composition. Volz and Bäumgartel hold that only one or two dialogues of Job and his friends and only one monologue belong to the original composition. The speeches of God out of the whirlwind are not original, nor is the narrative frame. This is the reductive method. Otto Eissfeldt, in his *Introduction to the Old Testament* (1934), is alone in defending almost all the text, including the happy ending, as the work of a single author who synthesized preexisting elements into a whole. But even he does not defend the authenticity of the Elihu speeches.

It would appear, therefore, that while Shakespeare has been elevated to the category of the sacred, the Bible has been reduced to the level of the non-sacred. This, however, is not quite true. Even those who vote against the happy ending of Job have a certain reverence for the received text. Were they not psychologically bound to it they

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would not be spending their lives scrutinizing it and searching out its inconsistencies. If it is so barbarous, unoriginal, and so full of human error, why is it so important? Even the Protestant reductive scholars of the Bible seem to see it in some obscure fashion as sacred writ. They listen to the weekly reading in the Church with all due reverence. The text may be the work of pious bunglers, the images may be banal ("Edom is my washpot"), but God has chosen it for His own good reasons to bring salvation to mankind. That is the nature of a sacred text.

By contrast, the assumption of sanctity with regard to a work of human imagination is one that leads to impossible contradictions. Here transcendent value, not having a transcendent point of reference on which to establish itself, must be rooted in the critical evaluation process itself. The discovery of the image pattern, of the myth structure, of the verbal nexus, and above all of unity, must confirm and validate the transcendent value of the writing, for there are no other available criteria whereby that value may be confirmed.

WHERE then do we go from here? There is evidently no way back to the old, simple distinction between the secular and the sacred. But it might be suggested that at this point the two fields have something to learn—or rather, relearn—from each other. The study of poetry has obviously gained enormously in richness and depth from sacred hermeneutics, in the sense, particularly, of the unity of the work of art. But now the time has come to regain something of the distance, the philological and historical bias, the awareness of the merely human which inform so much modern Bible criticism. This would help to create a saner balance, for instance, in the present study of Blake. Bible criticism, for its part, might relearn something of the more reverent, more integrative attitude to poetic texts which has been cultivated in the modern period by critics of Dante, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth. It would then be in a position to attend more closely to images, to ironic contrasts, echo-structures, and other patterns of analogy in the manner recently counseled by Robert Alter ("A Literary Approach to the Bible," COMMENTARY, December 1975). Such attention could reveal surprising configurations of meaning in biblical texts which had hitherto been treated as a tangle of different sources and "documents."

But in the end it is not just a matter of methods and techniques; it is a matter of how we view the status of literature and the status of criticism. Are the novel, the poem, the drama simply human speech like other kinds of human speech, only patterned and intensified for particular situations and purposes? Is the poet a man speaking to men, or is he, as Joyce says in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (a novel which actually dramatizes the transvaluation of sacred symbols into secular norms)—"a priest of eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life"? Is the novelist a man with a social role as normal as that of the tax-collector, though more bountiful in supplying us with happiness and self-understanding, or is he that man of mystery and terror of whom Coleridge warns in the closing lines of *Kubla Khan*—

Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of paradise?

Ultimately, we have to make our choice. There will be practical implications. If the poet is a dervish, art becomes a cult. Anti-Semitic incitement (as in the Oberammergau Passion Play) is privileged because it is art; similarly, nudity on the stage. But if art is a normal function of society, presumably it will be subject (as in Shakespeare's day) to the same norms that obtain elsewhere. It will enjoy no special immunity.

There will also be no canon. In fact, the whole notion of a canon of literature may prove to be a will-o'-the-wisp, a false notion imported from the realm of the sacral. There are books which please, charm, touch our finer natures. They may work for one group of men and not for others, for one generation but not for the next. There is no magic line that divides them from other books. Who shall say which is the dividing line between journalism and literature? Defoe, expert in both, could not have said—he would probably have been surprised at the question. The structuralists may help redress the balance, for they speak less of the charm and beauty of art and more of the language of signs that is common to all human speech. The grammar of a poem, they say, is not at bottom different from other kinds of grammar. Is then all human speech poetry? Perhaps it is. Perhaps that is the real mystery—man as a maker of signs, an inventor of symbols. The first man seeing the first sunrise and naming it was creating metaphor. Which is a little like what the talmudic rabbis tell us. Psalm 92, they say, was the first poem uttered by the first man on the first morning of his life. The occasion created the poem as much as the words. The test will then be pragmatic. If it lives for us it is a true sign. But occasions change; sunrises, happily, do not. Other signs move out of our lives as the things signified cease to matter to us. They take the poems with them.

IS THERE, then, a special status for sacred writ? Is not that, too, simply a language of signs like other human speech? Indeed it is. To speak of the Jewish tradition (which is not entirely irrelevant, since this is where the notion of a sacred text evidently began in the West), the rabbis were emphatic in declaring that "the Torah speaks in the language of men." This is a more basic and far-reaching notion than is usually

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thought. Sacredness does not imply a special ontological category of writing; it is not really a literary quality at all. It is more a matter of a contract between the reader and the text. The essential terms of this contract are practical. The text claims for itself a certain historical validity—this, as Erich Auerbach has pointed out, is basic to the biblical mode of narration—while the reader for his part says, in effect, "I will accept and I will obey."

Historical validity takes us back to a further rabbinic principle, namely that "Scripture never departs from its literal sense." It remains rooted in the historical circumstances of its composition. From this point of view, Torah (that is, the Hebrew word which comes nearest to the notion of a sacred text) resists complete interiorization. Torah is not, as the more radical followers of Rudolf Bultmann would say, a matter of the Word unfolding within us, of which the text is merely a kind of gloss. On the contrary, the Word validates itself in the historical present as it does in the past. The text remains alive because the kind of history that it celebrates remains with us. Put very simply, biblical poems are aids to memory. "And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles have befallen them, that this poem shall testify before them as a witness, for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed" (Deuteronomy 31:21). Present occasions are linked with past occasions—this is the true hermeneutic circle of interpretation. The test of the so-called canon is from that point of view essentially pragmatic.

The other side of the contract likewise belongs to the extra-literary dimension. Texts are sacred because they command and because we assent to their commands. This is something which makes Torah both more and less than secular art. The first eighteen chapters of Leviticus are not great art; probably they are not art at all. They would not pass Arnold's test for inclusion in the classics. But they are, as C.S. Lewis once put it, "remorselessly and continuously sacred." And that is because they manifestly command. If in discussions of "The Bible as Literature" we tend to hear more about Isaiah than about Leviticus (Arnold prepared a reading text of Isaiah for schools), this is a sign that in the "changing of the guard" that I have described, that secularization of attitudes which belonged originally to the realm of sacred literature, some essential determinant has been lost.

IN FACT, biblical hermeneutics was only partially adopted by the secular critics and philosophers of the 19th century from Coleridge onward. They stressed the richness, the unity, the "high seriousness" of their chosen literary texts. Poems and other works of art became "creative," "revelatory," eternally "meaningful." But they did not and could not command.

Torah is ultimately the voice of command. This constitutes its phenomenological uniqueness. Perhaps it was the loss of this dimension in Christianity which opened the way for the confusion between the Bible and secular art. The essential feature of the contract was missing; what was left was the pathos, the sublimity. Milton was "smit with the love of sacred song." If we are smit with the love of Milton, we are in much the same case as he was, and we may value *Paradise Lost* accordingly. But *Paradise Lost* does not command. It remains to that extent a human document, immensely rich and immensely moving, but a human document nevertheless; it makes no absolute claims.

Hamlet too does not command. Shakespeare may point in that direction when he has his hero say:

> And thy commandment all alone shall live.
> Within the book and volume of my brain,
> Unmixed with baser matter.

This is a great and moving sentence, my own "touchstone" from Hamlet. But the point is that the ghost of Hamlet's father does not command even the most devout Shakespeareans among us. More than that, he does not even command Hamlet himself. He proves to be an ambiguous and misleading ghost, a phantom indeed; and Hamlet ends by seeking out his own wavering and uncertain path to the life of dialogue. He has no external guide. In this sense, the play is not only about a man facing his task; it is about the limitations of secular art itself, about the desires that it awakens in us, but which it is ultimately, of itself, unable to gratify.

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The Hostage Mentality

Dorothy Rabinowitz

WHEN, against a din of pealing church bells, the Hanafi Muslims released their prisoners in Washington, D.C., last March, it was understood by everyone who had paid attention to the recent history of domestic terrorism that only the first and most crucial stage of the drama had ended. Stage two was about to begin: the interviews with the released hostages, the prayers of thanksgiving, and the testimonials to the patience and expertise of the law-enforcement authorities who had, in this case, also given their word, on which they later made good, that the Hanafi leader responsible for the assaults on the B'nai B'rith offices, the Washington District Building, and the Islamic Center—in which one person had been killed, one permanently crippled, and one hundred thirty-four kept prisoner and threatened with decapitation—could go free on his own recognizance.

As has by now become usual in such events, the most striking aspects of these rites of deliverance were to be found in the behavior of the released hostages themselves, specifically in their expressions of sympathy and understanding for their former captors. One woman, from the B'nai B'rith building, described her feelings for the Hanafis: "I felt sorry for them," she said, "constantly taking us to the bathroom. I don't think they meant to kill us." A man who had been a hostage at the District Building and had served as liaison with the outside (while an armed Hanafi stood over him) had, while still inside, also described—and with a great deal of warmth and enthusiasm—the consideration which the Hanafis showed in letting him and his fellow hostages go to the bathroom. Chosen by his captors—wisely, it would appear—to testify to their civilized conduct during the siege, this hostage set about after his liberation to amplify the testimonial made under threat of guns, continuing on his own the role assigned him by the Hanafis of character witness and, in effect, ally.

Another testimonial came from a B'nai B'rith secretary whom the Hanafi leader, Hamaas Abdul Khaalis, had selected to answer his telephones after first ascertaining that she was not a Jew. She had, the secretary later told the press, developed a certain sympathy for her captor. "He was very nice. He's basically a compassionate person." In addition to this expression of gratitude—the secretary had in fact been well treated by Khaalis, compared to the others in the B'nai B'rith building who were the objects of violently anti-Semitic tirades and often brutal behavior—the woman said that she had felt no fear whatever with the Hanafis, that she felt afraid only when she first saw the police.

So absolute is the logic of perversity attending these events that perhaps one should not be surprised to hear that for those taken captive, it is not the captors but the liberators who are the real object of hostility. No doubt the secretary did not really *fear* the police more than she did Khaalis; rather, she harbored a wish, so common among released hostages, to remain loyal to the notion of a "relationship" established between her captor and herself, a relationship which had, in this case, provided the promise of special protection in time of peril. That the source of her "protection" was also the sole source of her peril was, of course, the crucial truth from which the secretary, like other hostages before her, managed to keep her distance even after liberation.

NOR were the Washington hostages unique in this behavior, except perhaps in the degree to which their responses mocked reality (given the circumstances of the Hanafi assault, which was by far the cruelest and bloodiest of such events to date). In September 1976, a Serbo-Croatian "nationalist" group hijacked a jet full of passengers en route to Chicago from New York, and took those aboard on an odyssey first to Canada and then to Newfoundland, Iceland, and finally Paris. At Gander, the terrorists released twenty-five selected hostages, a number of whom promptly spoke up for the character of their hijackers and for their cause (Croatian independence from Yugoslavia), about which, some of them said regretfully, they had known nothing before. One passenger, the director of a medical foundation in Tucson, Arizona, said of the hijackers, "I wish them well. They had nothing against us but wanted only to get a story across."

The hijackers had in fact not only got their story across—an act of publicization which included seizing an airplane and holding thirty-five people captive for several days—but in addition had planted a bomb which later killed a New York City policeman. These facts notwithstanding, some of the passengers released at Gander explained that they had come to respect the hijackers—among other reasons, because they had sat with them during the flight and tried to explain their motives. This indispensable and by now hackneyed element in terrorist schemes is nevertheless one that clearly does not lose its power to flatter each new set of hostages with its suggestion of a "partnership," of shared militance in a just cause.

As in Washington, so with the passengers released at Gander and Paris, anger was directed not to-

DOROTHY RABINOWITZ *is the author of* New Lives: Survivors of the Holocaust Living in America, *a section of which appeared in our October 1976 issue under the title, "Portrait of a Survivor."*

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ward those who had victimized them but, in this case, at one of their own number, a Roman Catholic priest. During the final part of the flight, with fuel running low and the hijackers' tempers unsteady, the priest had begun to give the rites of absolution over the intercom; in addition, he had accused the hijackers of sinning by encroaching upon the rights of others. This behavior, the other passengers said on their release, had greatly angered them, and still angered them. For there they had sat, in "dialogue" with their captors—as they were later to remember, not without pride—when the priest had intruded with his accusations about the rights of others, his rites of absolution, his reminders, in short, of the cold reality lurking behind all their "dialogue": that they had been subjugated by gunmen and that the price of this deed might well be their lives. That, once free, they should have most resented the one person who had failed to acquiesce in the standard of behavior imposed by the terrorists is perhaps less to be wondered at than the fact that they could still find no blame in their hearts for the hijackers.

EVEN when, as was true in the Washington episode, hostages had ample evidence of the brutality of which their captors were capable, an effort was made to find the positive side of events. In the second stage at Washington—the stage in which the hostages displace their captors and become themselves the leading communicants in the drama—the press elicited from the former prisoners a particularly long-running flow of commentary touching on the philosophical, sociological, and other lessons they had extracted from their experience. A stream-of-consciousness report by one hostage, which appeared in a New York newspaper, took heed of the camaraderie that had existed among black and white, Jewish and Christian prisoners held by the Hanafis at the B'nai B'rith offices. Having expressed his belief that the experience had confirmed "the human family's" strength in adversity, the former hostage then recorded his attempts to understand the behavior of the Hanafis. He was puzzled that Hamaas Abdul Khaalis had singled out Jews for vilification and blame, since the Jews, he wrote, had felt only *compassion* for Khaalis when his wife and children were slain some years earlier. In this the writer attested, however unconsciously, to the enduring grip of a centerpiece of liberal-progressive orthodoxy—the notion that the *reasons* for criminal behavior are always of the first importance, and the faith that criminal behavior is always rooted in a social cause, which in this case the criminal only had failed to locate correctly.

In one way or another, most of the commentary on the Washington raids was informed by the same set of attitudes. Thus, during the siege itself, a program on Khaalis was featured on public television in New York. One of the journalists on the show spoke with considerable passion of Khaalis, describing him as a man who, having suffered a monumental tragedy in the bloody murder of his family by fellow Muslims, had found no way to make an indifferent society pay attention to him. Another member of the panel objected, mildly, that the killers of the Khaalis family had in fact been promptly caught, tried, and sentenced to life imprisonment. This comment was received by the other panelists with grim patience, not unlike that which families reserve for the unsolicited irrelevancies of their eldest and faintly dotty members. Over and over, the commentators on this and other news programs preferred instead to cite the callousness of a society which had so far failed to serve the needs of one of its citizens as to provoke him to violent assault. Society, it was maintained, had failed to express adequately a sense of community with Khaalis after the murder of his wife and children; there had been a splurge of publicity, then the world had gone about its business. In an article in the Washington *Post,* a writer described how he used to drive past the house where Khaalis's family had been killed and shudder, but no more than shudder; in the aftermath of the Hanafi rampage, he continued with remorse, "I give it [the murder of Khaalis's family] the thought it deserves—too late. I feel sorry for the man."

ALL these instances of hand-wringing over Khaalis on the part of the press are instances as well of the calamitous effect on public discourse of the last five decades of progressivist social rhetoric. It is, of course, true that the world inhabited by professional social commentators is different from that of most people, who more often than not have to bear the brunt and all the practical consequences of the idealism so freely espoused by the pundits. One has become accustomed to making the necessary mental adjustment between reality as it is perceived by most people and as it is seen by that special society of editorial writers and "advocacy" journalists whose business it is to serve as the nation's liberal conscience. What *is* new and noteworthy is the spectacle of ordinary citizens, such as some released hostages, responding to the direct experience of victimization in the same cant phrases. In New York recently, a gunman held several officials of the Housing and Development Administration at gunpoint while making known his demands, which included $500,000 for a Muslim mosque and the suspension of city parking rules on Muslim holidays. During the five-hour ordeal the gunman offered the obligatory explanation of his "motives" to his hostages: he had, he informed them, earlier that day been evicted from his apartment. Upon release, one former hostage observed that the ordeal had been nerve-wracking but that he did not doubt that the Muslim was justified in his complaints. "I regret that much of his social complaints are valid and accurate," this man noted. "His people have been discriminated against. I'm a Jew and I've been discriminated against all my life. I suppose his act has social value."

What is one to make of the wealth of good will and understanding exhibited by citizens of a democracy toward those who have robbed them of their freedom, terrorized and humiliated them? In what tradition can one set the behavior of citizens who, having passed through extreme danger and suffering,

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choose (once the danger is past) to deny the criminal nature of their captors in order to affirm approved social attitudes? It is impossible, when hearing the comments of some released hostages, to avoid the conclusion that the well-known reverence for "openness" and "dialogue" endemic among Americans—as was evidenced perhaps most vividly by the remarks of the hostages at Gander—has taken a terrible toll both of their capacity to perceive reality and, not least, of their moral sense. No one would expect hostages to resist their captors openly, to undertake battle with men armed with machetes and guns, or do anything other than what the hostages in Washington and elsewhere did, which was to obey orders and stay alive. It is, however, fair to expect that after their danger is safely past hostages might avail themselves of the single form of resistance still remaining, which is to refuse to accede in retrospect to the aims of those who have victimized them. Instead, in episode after episode recently, a significant number of released hostages have tacitly continued to acquiesce in a design the sole purpose of which is the further dissemination of the terrorists' "message."

No less a personage than the captain himself of the airplane hijacked by the Croatian nationalists said to his passengers, at the end of that episode: "We have all been through an incredible experience. But it is over for us. No one is hurt. However, it is not over for our hijackers. Their ordeal is just beginning. They have a cause. They are brave, committed people. Idealistic, dedicated people. Like the people who helped to shape our country. They are trying to do the same for theirs. I think we should give them a hand."*

Now, it can be argued that the newly released hostage who expresses understanding for his captor reacts as he does merely out of a surfeit of gratitude and good feeling, and out of the joy of being alive—all understandable emotions after such an ordeal. And it is the case, of course, that gratitude (including gratitude to their former captors for not doing worse than they did) played no small part in the responses of all these hostages. What is at issue here is not their gratitude but its peculiar nature, a sympathy for their captor and his cause which approaches ideological collaboration. In contemporary double-talk, to express understanding for the criminal is to take sides, to take sides with him and against his victim, and this the hostages did when they were no longer themselves victims; at that point, after society had brought all its machinery to bear on their release, they took the side of the terrorists against society itself, and hence against the future victims of terrorist acts.

By their expressions of sympathy, by their understanding consideration of their captors' past history, by their elaborate and respectful ruminations on the logic which had moved the terrorists to act as they did, the released hostages affirmed a principle which for some time now has been clear to the fanatic element in America: that those who undertake the terrorist mode can count on certain sizable rewards, among them the conversion of victims into allies (rather then enemies), of captives into publicists (rather than witnesses for the prosecution). The secretary in Washington who had witnessed brutality after brutality visited on others but who nevertheless did not fail to testify that her former captor was a sensitive, compassionate man; the foundation head from Tucson and the pilot of the plane who, upon being liberated, commenced to offer their good wishes to the Croatian hijackers and the good cause they represented; the HDA official in New York, offering public approval of the "social value" of his captor's deed—all these, in attesting to their own "advanced" attitudes of social awareness and responsibility, display an utter indifference to any but their own concerns and enhance the prospects that others will some day undergo agonies such as the ones they themselves endured, and possibly worse. It is "enlightened" attitudes like these that make a mockery of the idea of social conscience.

* Quoted in Richard Brockman, "Notes on Being Hijacked," *Atlantic*, December 1976.

What Makes Vidal Run

Joseph Epstein

IN THOSE journals in which they appear, Gore Vidal's essays are the intellectual equivalent of the comics. Intellectual journals are not noted for providing many laughs, but laughter is Gore Vidal's specialty—what he plays for and what he is about. The chief ploy in a Vidal essay is to point out that the emperor has no clothes and then to go a step further and remove the poor man's skin. The spectacle can be most amusing, assuming, of course, that it is not one's own carcass that is being stripped. But two questions present themselves: How serious is Gore Vidal? And how seriously ought he to be taken?

As it should in a familiar essayist, Gore Vidal's personality permeates all he writes. More than merely permeating his essays, his personality is, as we nowadays say, very much up front. His grudges,

JOSEPH EPSTEIN, *who contributed "Rediscovering Mencken" to our April issue, is the editor of the* American Scholar.

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his biases, his social origins, hints about his sexual adventures, the bits of gossip he has to divulge—all come into play. Often it is less what he has to say than what he says by the way that is of greatest interest. While he claims to detest the cult of personality in writing, perhaps no other contemporary writer plays to it as thoroughly as he. Along with his lacerating wit, his splendidly fluent prose, and his wickedly funny mimicry, it is part of the attraction.

Another part of the attraction is that Gore Vidal, in this nation of the sons and grandsons of immigrants, is moderately well born, passing, among Americans, as something of an aristocrat. The reason that we know this is that he keeps telling it to us. His maternal grandfather was Senator T. P. Gore of Oklahoma; his father was said to have been the best all-around athlete ever to have attended West Point, as well as Franklin Delano Roosevelt's first Director of Aeronautics; he himself was a friend of Mrs. Roosevelt; and his stepfather, whom he shared briefly with Jacqueline Kennedy, was Hugh Auchincloss. Far from resenting their upper classes, Americans tend to be quite balmy about them. As a celebrity intellectual, a habitué of the television talk shows, Gore Vidal is the equal in fame to his political opposite number, William F. Buckley, Jr. Quite apart from one's politics, a good accent and what is taken to be an aristocratic point of view are no deterrent in these democratic United States.

Gore Vidal has also been not only a highly productive but a considerably successful writer, though his success has perhaps not been quite of the kind he would have wished. While his fiction more often than not achieves the commercial status of best-sellers, it has not been taken as seriously as he should no doubt like. But he is generally considered to be a master of the essay. ("America's finest essayist," says the *New Statesman*.) Novelist and essayist are not altogether separate creatures, however. Aristocratic yet radical heroes out of tune with their times—Julian the Apostate, for example, or Aaron Burr—these are the figures Gore Vidal the novelist is drawn to; it is also the kind of figure upon which Gore Vidal the essayist has modeled himself. If his standing in the view of the world is not so high as he might like, in his own view it is very high indeed. Self-love, in him, does not go unrequited. In a recent interview, he has compared himself as a critic to Edmund Wilson; Vidal is used to placing himself among good company. But mightn't this be, one wonders, an act not of social but of intellectual climbing?

As a critic, Edmund Wilson was preeminently the connoisseur. His great art was that of an introducer and importer of literature, which, without a trace of condescension, he would lay out before his readers: explaining how a piece of literature works, why it is important, what its place is in the grand scheme of things. As with so many writers who have spent their careers chiefly on the attack—Dwight Macdonald, say, or John Simon—Gore Vidal, unlike Wilson, has no convincing language of praise.

In two of the essays in his most recent collection, *Matters of Fact and Fiction*,* Vidal does come to praise rather than, as usual, to bury—and neither essay quite convinces. The first is "The Great World and Louis Auchincloss," in which Vidal sets out to make the case that Louis Auchincloss's talent as a novelist has gone insufficiently recognized because, in the 50's, "he did not appear to deal with anything that really mattered, like the recent war, or being Jewish/academic/middle class/heterosexual in a world of ball-cutters." Louis Auchincloss himself has written: "I was perfectly clear from the beginning that I was interested in the story of money: how it was made, inherited, lost, spent." This is a very great subject, and Vidal's case for the novelist who has chosen to take it up is compelling up to a point—the point at which one reads Auchincloss's novels. If one has, then Vidal's essay is likely to seem an instance of what the English call over-egging the pudding. Although he is a novelist of seriousness, Louis Auchincloss's novels suffer from what is perhaps the upper-class fault of too great a reticence. He is interested in money, all right, but he does not tell us enough about the mechanics of it. Too often, moreover, his novels degenerate into the stale, and rather cardboard, drama of the depredations of new money upon old money. But in Vidal's telling, the neglect of Louis Auchincloss is tantamount to our neglecting the direct novelistic descendant of Henry James and Edith Wharton in our midst.

The other writer Vidal praises is Italo Calvino. Here his task more closely resembles that which Edmund Wilson regularly took upon himself—a bit of "cultural cross-fertilization," as Wilson used to call it, introducing the little-known work of a writer of one country to the readers of another. Vidal goes through the Wilsonian steps, telling us what is special about Calvino's talent, specifying what he does that no other novelist does, patiently tracing his development by summarizing each of his novels. But then, when he comes to the crux of the matter, the point at which Calvino appears to have struck out for new literary ground in a new "marvelous creation," Vidal backs away. "I shall spare myself the labor," he writes, "noting, however, that something new and wise has begun to enter the Calvino canon. The artist seems to have made a peace with the tension between man's idea of the many and of the one." Here, at just the point where Edmund Wilson would have rolled up his sleeves and set to work, Vidal departs the premises.

As a literary critic, Vidal is much to be preferred on the attack, where he can work his ploy of the emperor-has-no-clothes. The three best essays in *Matters of Fact and Fiction* are essays of this kind: "French Letters: Theories of the New Novel," "The Hacks of Academe," and "American Plastic: The Matter of Fiction." All three have to do with the so-called "postmodernist novel," the first with its theoretical underpinnings, the second with the criticism devoted to it, and the third with the American products themselves, the fiction of

* Random House, 285 pp., $10.00.

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Barthelme, Barth, Gass & Company. The first essay is appropriately serious—fewer detours for snideness, fewer one-liners; the second two essays are straight-out devastating. The effect is that of a literary massacre; when Vidal is finished, in the words of one of Truman Capote's killers in *In Cold Blood*, there is hair and flesh all over the walls. If one happens to come to these essays already in agreement with Vidal—as I did—then one can only salute him for a job supremely well done.

ONE OF the tests of a critic, however, is how persuasive he is when one does not come to his work already in agreement. Does he persuade one to change one's mind, or at least to reconsider one's own position? In "The Top Ten Best Sellers," Vidal had the nice notion of reviewing the best-selling fiction of the spring of 1973. The result is, predictably, a romp. Alas, one of the novelists on the list happens to be a serious one, perhaps the most serious novelist now at work, Alexander Solzhenitsyn. (It could have been worse; one of Gore Vidal's own novels could have been on the list; or one by Saul Bellow, a novelist he is on record as admiring. The best-seller list can be more complex a matter than Vidal makes it out to be, namely, a perfect reflection of the shabby tastes and pitiful fantasies of his countrymen.)

How does Vidal deal with Solzhenitsyn? Callowly, I should say, and callously. He refers to him more than once as "the noble engineer." After making the obligatory remarks about Solzhenitsyn's courage, he scribbles the by now crusty cliché of those who do not—or cannot—come to terms with Solzhenitsyn's work that "we must honor if not the art the author." He then goes on to dismiss Solzhenitsyn's *August 1914* in a few jokey paragraphs. Not a very impressive performance, especially when, in the same essay, he praises Mary Renault for forcing "even the dullest book-chat writer to recognize that bisexuality was once our culture's norm and that Christianity's perversion of this human fact is the aberration and not the other way round."

Not that it is surprising that Gore Vidal is dismissive of Alexander Solzhenitsyn. A figure such as Solzhenitsyn is, to put it gently, an enormous inconvenience to a writer with Vidal's politics; as great an inconvenience, in a different way, as he was to Gerald Ford and Henry Kissinger. What are those politics? It is not sufficient to say that they are conventionally left wing. They are fanatical in their conventionality, exceptional in their utter unoriginality. To get a firmer idea of what Gore Vidal's politics are, one must imagine someone who has over the past ten years read every single issue of the *Nation*, *Ramparts*, and the *New York Review of Books* and believed every word he has read. Things, in Vidal's politics, couldn't be worse—or less complicated. As sophisticated as Vidal can be in literary matters, so is he coarse in political matters. Attend to a few scraps of sentences which one can finish on one's own: "Since we are essentially a nation of hustlers. . . ."; "The United States has been a garrison state for the last thirty-two years. . . ."; we are "a nation that worships psychopaths. . . ."; "the master-criminal Lyndon Johnson. . . ."; "the federal constitution . . . has gone on protecting the property of the worthy for two hundred years. . . ."; "The United States has always been a corrupt society. . . ."; and so on.

What Vidal has done, in the essays that comprise the section of his book he entitles "Matters of Fact," is to find books for review that result in essays which give full vent to his politics. Most of the essays are thus setups—so many milk bottles to be knocked over by Vidal's spitballs. Vidal on West Point is the usual philippic about the military-industrial complex. Vidal on a book about ITT is the standard stuff about the evils of the multinational corporations, with references down nostalgia alley all the way back to United Fruit stories. Vidal on E. Howard Hunt attempts to make a case for Lee Harvey Oswald being not a left- but a right-winger. Vidal on Robert Moses displays the stock-in-trade items about the infinite corruptibility of urban politicians.

In short, no surprises, though quite a few disappointments. Put through the meat grinder of Vidal's politics, even such appetizing subjects as the Adams family and Ulysses S. Grant are chopped up into the same dull hamburger: the first Vidal finds interested chiefly in protecting the property of what in America passes for an elite, the second was corrupted in a country that, then as now, has always been corrupt. Vidal refers to the right-wing nightmares strewn with "commie-weirdo-fag-nigger-lovers," but his own nightmares are strewn with CIA-Mafia-military-industrial-Rockefeller-jock-heterosexuals. Crude politics makes bad literature.

STILL, Vidal remains famous for his wit. Above all else—even despite all else—it is what one reads him for. But this book forces the question, What is the nature of that wit? There is wit that is gentle, wit that is playful, wit that is wise. But Gore Vidal's wit is angry; it needs a target, some person or thing to spit on or kick over. Witty though they may be—without the wit they would be altogether unreadable—these are the essays of an angry man. One senses the vigor of grudge behind so much of what he writes. What is the source of Gore Vidal's anger?

On the face of it, he has many reasons for contentment. As a novelist, he sells well and reaches a wide audience. He has worked in Hollywood, for television, and on Broadway, and come away uncontaminated. His celebrity is substantial, the equal certainly to that of the other celebrity intellectuals of our day: Galbraith, Buckley, Capote, Mailer. Yet his anger is nonetheless real, unlike that of, say, George Bernard Shaw, who in his later years came to seem a professional maverick, a man working an act that had worked very well for him in the past. Vidal's anger is best understood if we look at the villains of his essays—Jews, academics, the middle class, and heterosexuals—and attempt to understand why he regards them as villainous.

Jews and academics are bound together in Vidal's contempt, and both, it does not seem going too far

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to surmise, are connected with his own discontent over his status as a novelist. As a novelist of seriousness writing for a large public, Vidal has compared himself with Saul Bellow, but he is, so far as is known, alone in making the comparison. Nobody else has done so; neither among academic nor among metropolitan critics. In "The Great World and Louis Auchincloss," Vidal refers to "the breathy commercial fictions of all Irvingses—so unlike the higher relevancies of all the Normans." Earlier he complains about Alfred Kazin's reference to Jews as "the mental elite of the power age." He is fairly open in his complaint that Jewish writers seem, as they say on the fair grounds, to have an X on the joint—the X being a monopoly, the joint being contemporary American fiction. A conspiracy is hinted at; hence the neglect of poor Louis Auchincloss. Yet, as conspiracy theories go, this one is already badly dated. The fabled renaissance in fiction by Jewish writers appears already to have petered out, and such public as exists for serious fiction has begun to look elsewhere.

As FOR Vidal's hatred of the middle class, this is connected with his hatred of, if not heterosexuals, then all that is implicit in heterosexuality: family, raising children, saving, looking to the future through one's children, religion, the humdrum business of life lived in the quotidian. Vidal has never made any secret of his own homosexuality—in *The City and the Pillar* (1948) he published one of the first explicit novels about homosexuality in this country—but of late he has become a propagandist for what once used to be justified as a mere preference. "The love that dare not speak its name," homosexuality used to be called; but so completely have the tables been turned that it now appears to be heterosexuals who dare not speak the name homosexuality. In the reviews of *Matters of Fact and Fiction* that I have read no one has seen fit—not in the New York *Times Book Review* or in *Harper's*—to mention that homosexuality is a strong motif running throughout the book.

It would be better literary manners not to mention sex at all—one wouldn't in the case of most heterosexual writers, with the possible exception of Norman Mailer—but it becomes impossible not to do so here, because Vidal drags (no pun intended, as he would say) it in wherever possible; to the point, even, of obsession. The respectable public (as opposed to the university) novel, he writes, "is always naturalistic, usually urban, often Jewish, and, of course, deeply, sincerely heterosexual." Part of the reason for the neglect of Louis Auchincloss is "the continuing heterosexual dictatorship that has so perfectly perverted in one way or another just about every male in the country." Remarking upon Dan Jenkins's *Semi-Tough* in his "The Ten Top Best Sellers" essay, Vidal writes: "A peculiarity of American sexual mores is that those men who like to think of themselves as exclusively and triumphantly heterosexual are convinced that the most masculine of all activities is not tending to the sexual needs of women but watching other men play games. I have never understood this aspect of my countrymen but I suppose there is a need for it (bonding?), just as the Romans had a need to see people murdered."

Sometimes Vidal's obsession with homosexuality gets a bit confusing. He routs the myth that "all SS were fags," for example, which would seem to mean that homosexuality is not itself evil. Yet later, in a capsule standard caricature of J. Edgar Hoover—in Vidal's view the moral equivalent of an SS man—Hoover is accused of being homosexual. Then again he informs us that another (for him) American SS man, Senator Joseph McCarthy, was also a homosexual: "Just another genial pol with a drinking problem and an eye for the boys." Whatever is going on here, it sounds unpleasantly like fag-baiting.

"I touch with reluctance, and despatch with impatience," wrote Gibbon in Chapter 44 of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* "a more odious vice, of which modesty rejects the name, and nature abominates the idea." In his essay on the memoirs of Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal writes: "I never had the slightest guilt or anxiety about what I always took to be a normal human appetite." On the one hand Vidal remarks upon "the homophobia which is too much a part of the national psyche," while on the other hand he pours on the allusions, jokes, and straight talk about homosexuality, even occasionally, as in the Tennessee Williams essay, serving it up for entertainment. When referring to the propensity for sexual exaggeration of the young Truman Capote, for example, he writes: "*I should note* that the young Capote was no less attractive in his person then than he is today."

ONE might leave all this alone if Vidal didn't posit the notion that to be heterosexual is to be, somehow, stunted if not sick. (As bad, even, as being middle class or American.) Gore Vidal's homosexuality is of a contentious kind. He uses the word "homosexualist" as an honorific, rather like aerialist. Unlike other literary men who have come to terms with their homosexuality—W. H. Auden and E. M. Forster prominent among them—Vidal, for all his talk about freedom from guilt and anxiety, has not. In a recent essay on Christopher Isherwood, not included in this collection, he lauds Isherwood—who has himself of late spoken about "why there shouldn't be the most powerful sort of love, like St. Francis's, applied to one-night stands"—for obeying what he and other homosexuals construe to be the ecological imperative of not reproducing children.

The interesting problem, of course, is to what extent Gore Vidal's politics are the result of his contentious homosexuality. Is nihilism built into a certain strain of homosexuality? Many of the Pied Pipers of the youth rebellion of the late 60's were homosexuals. One of the disappointments of Martin Green's otherwise fascinating book, *Children of the Sun,* was the author's refusal to draw the line—or erase it completely—connecting sexual to political adventurism. Perhaps no firm connection can be made. But the question remains.

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Moraliste

SIMONE WEIL: A LIFE. By SIMONE PÈTREMENT. Translated by RAYMOND ROSENTHAL. *Pantheon. 577 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by EDWARD GROSSMAN

THE nose, the hairdo out of the cartoons, the eyes swimming in myopia—but a rather nice mouth, round as a rosebud. The flat shoes, the dowdy cloak, the thickish fingers. Also, for most of her life, vomiting migraines. Simone Weil would have had reason to think it was bad luck that the head has a body, and in this she wouldn't have been unusual for her type. But her vile flesh and hairshirt contained a most untypical steely will power, dubbed "Roman" by one of those who are grateful that they knew her.

The type that Simone Weil appears to have embodied, and that she did not completely transcend by her will and her gifts, is the intellectual-middle-class-virgin-of-Jewish-extraction. Some of the souls who resemble her may write in their diaries, or confess to their analysts, "I have to be like God, but like God crucified." Not many make good on this desire as convincingly as she did, for she killed herself at age thirty-four by stopping to eat. Likewise, the writing that she managed to do in her short time sets her apart. Often it is so lucid, superb, tight with force, that a reader can forget that Simone Weil's vocation was extinction.

We are stuck at a moment when suicide validates an intellectual's seriousness and authority. This backward touch has helped to give the reputation of Simone Weil mythic proportions. Added to the common fact of suicide are the circumstances in her case that make it look like the only right end she could have had, the last station along the way of a life made up of exemplary acts and situations: the *agrégée de philosophie* who goes to work in a Renault factory, the awkward pacifist who goes to fight in Spain, the Jew possessed by Jesus Christ, the grapepicker in the Midi, the refugee, the suicide, the saint.

These episodes from Simone Weil's life have been known to her readers in a vague, luminous fashion ever since her work started being posthumously collected and translated thirty years ago. It would have been a biographer's job to demystify them, without depriving her career of its mysteriousness. The biographer would have to keep in mind, resentfully perhaps, George Orwell's cold-porridge dictum about saints, that they should be judged guilty until they are proved innocent. The blurb on this biography tells why Simone Pétrement can't do what is required: she was "one of Simone Weil's closest friends. . . . Drawing on their close relationship and with access to Weil's papers and the full cooperation of her family, Simone Pétrement has written a beautiful work."

Had she been a writer, Pétrement might have written a beautiful work. As it is, her book is a glut of anecdotes and huge quotations from Simone Weil's letters and essays. The tone she takes is certainly reverential. "Confronted by so pure a life," Pétrement whispers in her preface, "one hesitates to speak out . . .who would not feel unworthy to touch such a life?" If authorized biographies are generally to be suspected (unless the biographer finishes not on speaking terms with the family or party), this one is vitiated twice, since Pétrement cherishes the memory of her friend and obviously thinks that to delve into certain matters would be to tarnish it.

Nevertheless, in so many pages there is bound to be a lot of raw material that will be valuable when Simone Weil finds her biographer. Pétrement may not realize how suggestive some of these stories are, beginning with her friend's earliest years:

> [The Weil family] once went to visit an old doctor who had invited them to his house. He made as if to kiss Simone's hand, and she started to cry, shouting, "Water! Water!" She wanted to wash. The intimacy with the famous bacteriologist, Elie Metchnikov, a friend of the Weils, and their general contact with medical science, had developed among them an extreme fear of microbes. Mme. Weil did not want people to kiss the children. Before all the meals, their hands had to be rigorously cleaned; and if André had to open a door after having washed his hands, he would use his elbow. These family habits had given Simone certain strong feelings of repugnance. She did not like to be kissed, or to eat and touch certain things. Sometimes she did not want to touch something that had been handled by other people. She spoke of her "disgustingness."

Later, at age thirty-one, as the Nazis are about to enter Paris:

> I recall [Pétrement remembers] that during one of the meals she wondered out loud what would happen if a young German parachutist landed on the terrace of their apartment and asked her parents what they would do about it. Calmly and practically, her father answered that, if possible, he would hand him over to the police. Simone declared that she could not go on eating with someone who had such intentions. I thought at first that she was joking, but she seemed to be speaking quite seriously and in fact stopped eating. To get her to continue eating, her father finally promised that he would not hand over the young parachutist.

Pétrement achieves the opposite of what she intends. By inattention or dubious interpretations, she encourages the reader to think of Simone Weil as a morbid case. His reaction to these data is to wonder what in the child's upbringing

EDWARD GROSSMAN's *essays and reviews appear regularly in* COMMENTARY *and other periodicals.*

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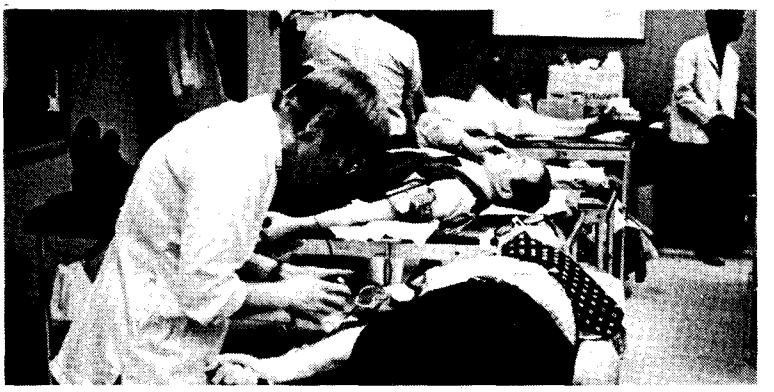

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By Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus

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fed her predispositions. Pétrement, constrained by love, can't begin to deal with this reductionistic question. She merely contradicts herself. André, Simone's prize-winning brother, made her feel "very stupid," "disgusting," and "sometimes the two children would fight." In the same paragraph: "She had great admiration and a warm feeling of friendship for her brother."

Nor does Pétrement appeal to the logic of the paradoxical that might actually come closest to explaining Simone Weil. For her, she was pure and "saintly" from childhood—no matter, for example, that she made that other Simone, de Beauvoir, feel small, because she, Weil, wept at the news of a famine in China. The reader is tempted to find Simone Weil guilty of the crime of saintly characters—egotism. And with that, to psychoanalyze her, neutralize the clairvoyant by making a diagnosis.

SIMONE WEIL'S writings show that she had moments of such clear-headed shrewdness that, under the circumstances, she was really a seer. Visiting Berlin in 1932, she wrote home, "I'm in the process of falling in love with the German people"—by which she meant the workers, with their lending libraries and hikes. But also: "The Nazi ideology is astonishingly contagious, notably in the Communist party." This affinity is a platitude now, but for a twenty-three-year-old Parisian from the fashionably pink upper middle class to have seen it then was remarkable. Furthermore, Weil did not accept the Trotskyite line about Stalin, that he was a freakish mistake. Stalinism, she wrote in little magazines, and had the bravery to stand up and say in French trade-union halls, was a natural fruit of the Revolution.

In some of her best essays, Simone Weil argues that if one were to look at the facts, he would be pessimistic about politics and revolution. She wants to be empirical about this, not rhetorical, yet her pained empathy with the workers shines through. Their oppression, she writes, is not caused by this or that class owning the machines, but follows, rather, from the organization of factories that is the same, probably must be the same, whoever the owners and managers are. It is Weil's sociology that perhaps can be most profitably read today. It has a tinge of that despair that she elaborated in her literary and historical writings, and succumbed to in her notebooks. In short, she feared that the strong are fated to abuse and murder the weak forever, and justice only comes accidentally, when "destiny" turns the tables. Strong and weak are equally pitiable, revolt is absurd.

Weil glorified the Greeks for gazing on these truths unflinchingly, without hypocrisy or delusions of exception. In her celebrated reading of the *Iliad*, she found that the poet's emotion "is spent upon the only true cause of bitterness: the subordination of the human soul to might, which is, be it finally said, to matter." That this wisdom, in whose absence there can be no moderation, humility, culture, or virtue, had been largely lost to Europe, to be replaced by the *ersatz* of science and humanism, was a constant theme with Weil. Her essays on antiquity always have explicit contemporary relevance.

ONE of Simone Weil's admirers, T.S. Eliot, noted that she "did not show the mind of the historian." Her genius was in her "great soul," and that is what a reader must be patient enough to try and make contact with. Eliot requested that she not be understood too quickly, that we approach her with one prejudice only—that she is unclassifiable. But she does fit roughly into a French tradition of *moralistes*, like her teacher Alain, like Camus. Such writers are very unreliable critics and historians, perhaps because of lack of knowledge, more likely because of a temperamental excess.

Compare Weil's treatment of the *Iliad* with the explication of the *Odyssey* and Isaac's near-sacrifice at the hands of Abraham by that other refugee, Erich Auerbach (in *Mimesis*). Here is the difference between a text used to make a moral point, and texts illuminated side-by-side; between criticism that means to compare cultures invidiously, and criticism of divergent cultures that moves above explicit moral judgment. The will predominates in the first species of writing. Eliot detects this strain in Weil, "in her adulation of Greece, . . . as in her disparagement of Rome and Israel." This made him uncomfortable, for "in denying the divine mission of Israel she is also rejecting the foundation of the Christian Church."

PÉTREMENT, in a footnote, recalls that Simone Weil said, "Personally, I am an anti-Semite." This was "as a joke," Pétrement explains. But Simone Weil was not a joker. In the opinion of Richard Rees, the English translator of most of her work and someone extremely sympathetic to her ideas and person, "she meant everything she said and wrote, literally." Like other anti-Semitic intellectuals of her time, Jewish and Gentile, she mediated an anxiety that was probably visceral through a kind of universal criticism of Jewish influence. In the essays that appeared while she was alive, these anti-Semitic passages come as perorations, more than a little jarring in their tone but still recognizably in the steady voice of the *moraliste*; while in the private notebooks, published after her death, we see the writer out of control, trembling whenever she thinks of the Jews.

Greek wisdom, she declares in her great essay on the *Iliad*, has been taken from us because the twin Roman and Hebrew world views supplanted it. The opposition between Jerusalem and Rome is only apparent, actually strictly meaningless, like the one between Moscow and Berlin. "The Romans and Hebrews both believed themselves exempt from the common misery of man, the Romans by being chosen by destiny to be the rulers of the world, the Hebrews by the favor of their God." Since the Church was Romanized, the Gospels—"the last and most marvelous expression of Greek genius"—have been slighted, and the Old Testament has been accorded conspicuous honor. "The Hebrews have been admired, read, imitated in actions and words, cited every time there was a need to justify a crime, throughout twenty centuries of Christianity."

She repeats herself in "The Great Beast." Because of a "twofold historical accident," the Romans and

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Hebrews succeeded in "contaminating," "negating," Christianity and Hellenism. First, "unfortunately," Rome adopted Christianity. "It was a second misfortune that Christianity's place of origin bequeathed to it a heritage of texts which often express a cruelty, a will to domination, an inhuman contempt for conquered or potentially conquered enemies, and a respect for force."

Stranded in London in 1943, Simone Weil confided to her diary:

> *Israel.* All from Abraham on inclusively (except for a few prophets) is filthy and monstrous, as if on purpose. As if to point out with absolute clarity: Note well! here is evil! A people chosen for blindness, chosen to be the executioners of Christ.
>
> The curse of Israel weighs heavily on Christianity. The atrocities, the Inquisition, the liquidation of heretics and infidels, this was Israel. Capitalism was (and to a certain degree still is) Israel. Totalitarianism, especially among the worst enemies of Israel, is Israel.
>
> . . .The Hebrews, having rejected the Egyptian revelation, got the God they deserved—a carnal and collective God who never spoke to anyone's soul, up to the time of exile. (Unless, in the Psalms. . .?) Among all the characters in the Old Testament accounts, Daniel's is the only pure one (apart from Abel, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, and Job).

The parentheses are touching; they reveal that Weil knew she was wrong, dead wrong, wickedly wrong. Toward the end, her notebooks are more often marked with fugitive references to "the truth which bursts forth in matchless accents of joy in the beautiful and pure parts of the Old Testament," only to be followed by terrible curses: "The Jews have been responsible for the uprooting of the whole terrestrial globe . . . the Jews are the poison of uprooting personified." This suggests that she might have been passing into the greatest crisis of her life, more fearful for her than her extended flirtation with the idea of baptism. Pétrement doesn't seem to be aware of this possibility, nor of the glaring Jewish Problem that her friend had all her brief life, thrown into highlight with the occupation of France.

While still in Marseilles with her parents, Weil wrote to Xavier Vallet, "Commissioner for Jewish Affairs," in connection with the Vichy regulation forbidding Jews to teach. Monsieur Vallat could regard her as a Jew if he wished. As for herself, "I do not consider myself a Jew. . . .[I] have been nourished since my early childhood only on the Hellenic, Christian, and French traditions." The cost of this pretense must have been high; it might have been fatal for her. It is hard to imagine that no one ever warned her, but Pétrement's biography contains no examples of either Jew or Gentile confronting her angrily, lovingly, with the truth. On the contrary, when Simone Weil begged the Free French in London to parachute her into occupied territory on a Resistance mission, Pétrement implies that no one had the heart to tell her that (if she survived the jump) her looks would cause her to be picked up immediately.

Simone Weil was denied the logical, just climax to her life and work —to be dropped into France in 1943, there to be arrested, tagged with the yellow star, interned with other Jews, shipped East. It is possible that in her great pain and ecstasy she had an inkling of this. Pétrement remembers that for someone who seemed less and less of this world, Weil read the newspapers avidly and "knew a lot about the events of the war and everything that was going on." It is not impossible that she heard of the suicide, three months before hers, also in London, of Shmuel (Artur) Zygelboym, a Bundist escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto, a member of the Polish government-in-exile, close to the Free French, who left a note: "By my death I wish to make my final protest

S. Zalman Abramov

Perpetual Dilemma

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A study evaluating the problem of traditional Judaism in the Jewish State — a problem that has confronted Israel from the first day of its inception in 1948. The author, currently deputy Speaker of the Knesset and a widely-respected lawyer who for nearly two decades has served on the Knesset's Committee on Law and Constitution, traces the development of religious influence in Israel against the events of the past century. He finds that the Jews are today a pluralistic society, in which traditional Judaism is no longer the dominant spiritual force. A provocative work by an authority who believes that the problem of Jewish religion in Israel today must be understood, and faced up to forthrightly.

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against the passivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the extermination of the Jewish people."

If one goes by Pétrement's book, Simone Weil, who found her being in acts of charity toward French workers and menials, peasants and Communists, Vietnamese, Arabs, and blacks, never had a good word or did a kind thing for a Jew in her adult life, which coincided exactly with the epoch of Hitler's ascendancy over Europe. Could the inhabitants of Jericho, slaughtered by Joshua three thousand years ago, have been realer to her than people with her family name who were being crucified at the moment she wrote? Conceivably, the answer is yes, they were more real, right to the end. If so, her Christ will forgive her for the outrage she committed, not on her kin, but on herself.

Insurgency

GUERRILLA. By WALTER LAQUEUR. *Little, Brown. 462 pp. $17.50.*

Reviewed by SETH CROPSEY

THE notion that Mao Tse-tung either invented or somehow perfected guerrilla warfare is a myth—one of a number of myths punctured by Walter Laqueur in his new book. Laqueur, a contributing editor of COMMENTARY and the author of, among others works, *A History of Zionism* and *Weimar,* has written a historical and critical study which throws a great deal of light on recent insurgent movements and the leaders they have spawned; its insights have much to teach those nations that are threatened by guerrilla movements and guerrilla tactics.

Laqueur begins by examining the history of insurgency since ancient times, providing thereby an overall picture both of guerrilla techniques and of the conditions which favor the growth and prospering of guerrilla movements. Prior to its recent enshrinement in the ideology of the radical Left, he argues, guerrilla warfare was simply another violent means of reaching for mostly political ends. And until the postwar era, when they came to be recognized as an effective fighting tool in their own right, guerrillas were merely considered a nuisance. What changed everything, especially in the lands dominated by the European imperial powers, was World War II, which, among its other effects, "undermined the confidence of the European ruling classes, led to deep economic and political unrest, and created revolutionary situations the world over." The upsetting of the balance of power in the colonial areas issued in an enormous explosion of guerrilla activity.

But, as Laqueur's argument shows, the military potential of guerrilla forces remains vastly overrated. Strategically, today's guerrillas are as inferior to regular armies as they ever were. Harassment and obstruction are the hallmarks of guerrilla tactics, yet these alone cannot reduce an enemy's army, something that generally must be done if the enemy is to be overthrown. "The Chinese Communists [under Mao] were not revolutionaries in the military field," Laqueur writes, "for the simple reason that the possibilities and variations of guerrilla warfare are limited." What defeated the Kuomintang was a regular army, not a band of doughty guerrillas; insurgency alone, as Mao well knew, could not win a war.

Vietnam is another example of the same rule. The Vietminh shifted back and forth from guerrilla to regular operations as conditions in their war with the French permitted. By 1954 they had resumed conventional tactics; the battle of Dien Bien Phu was a full-scale military engagement fought by two identifiable armies. France lost the battle and left the war. This pattern of fighting did not change much when the United States became involved in Vietnam. The Vietcong, unable to win on their own, accepted conventional military support from the North. Laqueur notes that "the number of North Vietnamese regulars who had been dispatched to the South by 1967 was estimated at 70,000."

Insurgents succeed, Laqueur concludes, when they abandon their

SETH CROPSEY *is an assistant editor of the* Public Interest.

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tactics for conventional methods, or when they join with conventional forces—or, alternatively, when their enemies do not or cannot defend themselves. The Batista dictatorship in Cuba, for example, was so weak and disinclined to resist that it crumbled at the first challenge; Castro won Cuba without a single major confrontation in the field. A weakness of a different kind is presented by liberal democratic governments, whose susceptibility to public opinion and those who shape it renders them perilously vulnerable to guerrilla tactics.

Laqueur stresses that there is no single political formula which explains the cause of recent—or ancient—guerrilla rebellions. In many African countries, the nationalism lit by Europe's disavowal of colonial ambition had great effect; events can also be set in motion by charismatic leadership *à la* Castro or Zapata; agrarian reform was at the heart of some insurrections and had absolutely nothing to do with others. Common to all is some dissatisfaction or other, though the list of grievances is as long as the list of actual guerrilla insurgencies and parallels the gamut of human misery itself.

THE "myths" of guerrilla warfare to which Laqueur addresses himself—that it is an agent of radical change, that it is invariably successful, that it is always undertaken to replace inequality with equality—might be described a bit less charitably as delusions, delusions that are peculiarly characteristic of our time. Today the very word "guerrilla" carries an aura of legitimacy about it, which may be why it is the favored self-description of hostage-takers and murderers-with-a-cause who are really not guerrillas but terrorists. Insofar as people in the West accept such idealized but inaccurate views, their willingness to resist insurgents, or help others resist them, becomes diminished. In this respect, not the least of the virtues of Laqueur's book is its deflation of Mao-Tse-tung's reputation as a guerrilla leader. Mao is often given credit in the West for the discovery or first use of a new or different and highly successful instrument for the seizure of power. By showing that this credit is undeserved, *Guerrilla* takes a step toward thinning the general esteem still reserved for that late tyrant.

In his thorough and commendably impartial way, Walter Laqueur has done much to clarify the nature of guerrilla warfare—what it is, and especially what it is not. His masterful book is neither rhetorically charged nor tendentious—although it is an implicit comment on the extent to which the myths about guerrillas have become embedded in our way of thinking that such clarification should be needed in the first place. One hopes that this book will become a standard text both for students of military and political history and for those in and out of government who must deal with the guerrilla phenomenon either as an actuality or as an idea.

"FOR THE LOVER OF WHAT IS NEW AND UNEXPECTED IN ART, Daniel Haberman's poems hold much pleasure. To suggest Robert Lowell as an influence would not be true, but they have certain strengths in common: in a choice of words that most directly express their meaning; a strongly moral point of view; a personal, quirky turn to the line that lays it on the ear. But there is no need to be too serious—Mr. Haberman has his own wit and lightness and his own original, and very beautiful, vision of nature: the look of things that so often goes unnoticed and that matters so much."

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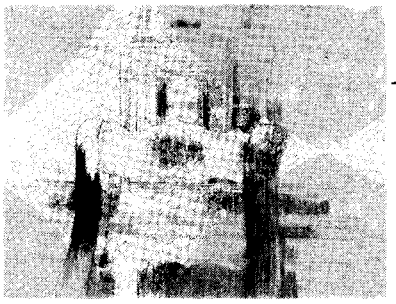
POEMS

By DANIEL HABERMAN



Drawings By CORNELIA BRENDEL FOSS

"Imagine Vassar Clements on his way to a fiddlers' convention and hearing Leonid Kogin or Paul Zukofsky tuning up in the bulrushes. 'Lord, Lord—did you ever hear it so serious; so gnomic, such texturing of the material???' Vassar, and I, would have to smile to ourselves, being reminded there are so many ways to play the instrument.

"Daniel Haberman is a man with a generous, courteous heart. When his words take me to 'Loitering Hill,' I am very definitely with him and feel the wind freshen from the direction of Amherst, and east of there where J.V. Cunningham lives. Useless to look for 'the modern'—it's not in these lines. But, good words like *skive* and *craning* and *keening*, they keep me reading. And Haberman's recognition that one course in his artist's nature will be the outward path. These first poems take the poet from his silence and well on tradition's way." —*JONATHAN WILLIAMS*

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The Corporate Mode

COMMUNITY AND POLITY: THE ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN JEWRY. By DANIEL J. ELAZAR. *Jewish Publication Society. 421 pp. $12.50.*

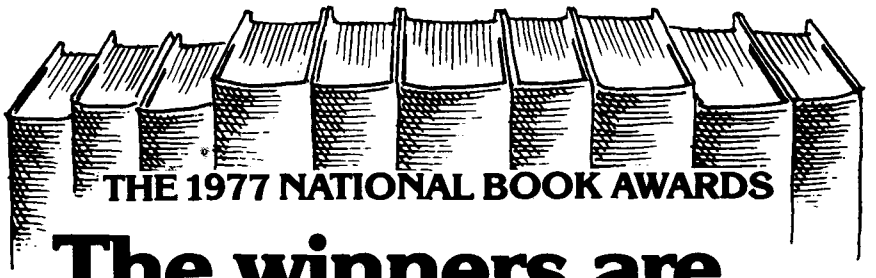
Reviewed by JULIUS WEINBERG

SINCE 1945 a corporate revolution has transformed the character of American Jewry. A communal structure that once bore the features of ideological pluralism and institutional autonomy is now marked by ideological consensus and bureaucratic centralism. A number of organizations and agencies have been weakened or have simply disappeared in the process, and those that have survived have been altered in a number of ways—in their funding and personnel, in their constituency, programs, and ideological underpinnings.

The emergence of the corporate community is in part the result of the acculturation and homogenization of American Jewry—a process of enfranchisement within the American experience that has pretty well decimated the ethnic and ideological infrastructure developed by waves of Eastern European immigrants and their children in the closing decades of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. The process has also been hastened and reinforced by overseas events—or rather, by the financial burdens assumed by American Jewry in response to these events, primary among them the Nazi Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel. But whatever the causes behind the new corporate mode, there can be do doubting that this mode has come to dominate the conduct of the Jewish community's day-to-day activities both at home and with regard to Jewish communities overseas.

In *Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of Ameri-*

JULIUS WEINBERG, *a new contributor, is professor of history at Cleveland State University. He is the author of* Edward Alsworth Ross and the Sociology of Progressivism *and co-editor of* The Social Fabric.



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can Jewry, Daniel J. Elazar provides a framework for understanding the historical sources of today's corporate community. For almost two hundred years, from the mid-17th century to the mid-19th century, American Jews, whatever their sub-ethnic origins, fulfilled their responsibilities as Jews through their congregations. The temple or synagogue provided the setting in which the religious requirements of the Jewish calendar, the rites of passage from the cradle to the grave, and the social and educational—and, on occasion, economic—needs of Jews were met. This role of the synagogue as the focal point of Jewish community organization came to an end as waves of immigration from Central and later from Eastern Europe, combined with the growth of urban centers in the United States, created complexities that could only be dealt with by specialized institutions outside the congregational framework. By the end of the 19th century, a large number of "secular" community services—benevolent societies, free-loan associations, libraries, orphan asylums, and *vereins* of various sorts—had been set up. While synagogues and temples were to remain an important element of the religious and educational experience of the American Jew—and today the only major institutions with some degree of autonomy within the corporate structure—the organization of the community and of community services was henceforth in the hands of agencies having no financial or ideological relationship to the religious institutions of Jewish life.

In a chapter on "The 'State' of American Jewry," Elazar traces the two-stage process by which these secular philanthropic agencies came to be consolidated: first through the united-charities movement of the 1860's and then through the establishment of welfare federations after the turn of the century. "The former," Elazar observes, "were indeed unions and represented the unification of diverse groups under a single governing body." The latter provided "an additional dimension of governance without eliminating or changing the governing bodies of their constituents." Thus, for example, the federation organized in Cleveland in 1903 developed a single fund-raising campaign on an annual basis for eight agencies. Many of these services and institutions, almost exclusively controlled by the German-Jewish element of the community, paralleled those established by the Eastern European Jews for themselves. By the eve of World War II, however, and with the exception of metropolitan centers of the size of New York and Chicago, religious, sub-ethnic, and immigrational differences among Jews had significantly receded. Existing agencies merged into welfare funds and federations serving an increasingly homogenized, middle-class community.

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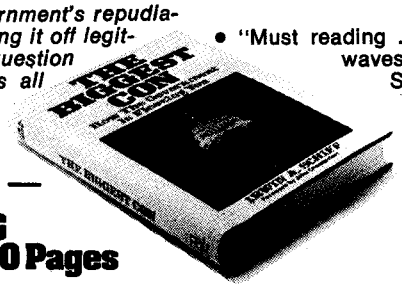

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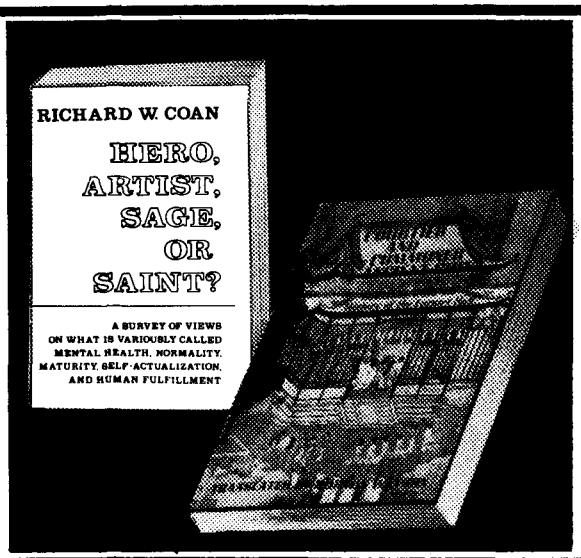
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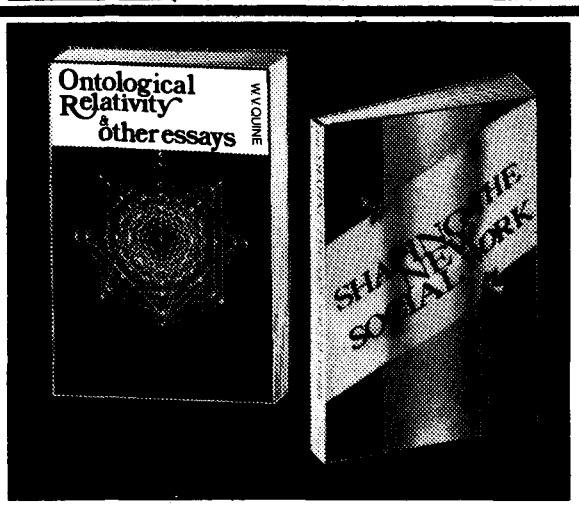

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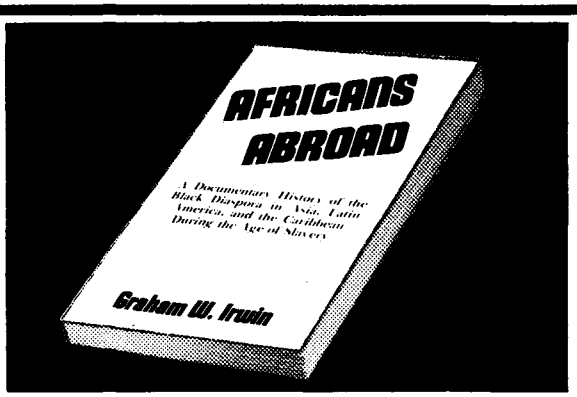
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II from three directions: from community councils, from what Elazar calls the "general-purpose, mass-based organizations" (the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith), and from the Zionists. The councils, established in a number of metropolitan centers, were an attempt to provide a structure that would combine the authority of the Eastern European *kehillah* with the democracy of a New England town meeting. Elazar describes the failure of that dream: in city after city these councils were absorbed by the more powerful fund-raising federations or became simply community-relations agencies. As for the national organizations, despite the attractiveness and relevance of their programs, they simply lacked a power base in each locality to withstand the emerging strength of the centralized federations; though they are still very much in existence, they cannot be said to play the role in American Jewish life that was once envisioned for them. And finally, the Zionists were defeated in their challenge to the federations both by a decline in ideological commitment and membership strength following the establishment of the state of Israel, and by David Ben-Gurion's pragmatic preference for dealing with fund-raisers and philanthropists.

Community and Polity is a virtual compendium of information on Jewish community organization in the United States. Elazar has gathered up a wealth of data on the history, geography, and demography of American Jewry, on the varieties of Jewish organizational patterns throughout the country, and on the diverse social-service, religious, community-relations, and "roof" organizations created by Jewish communities to serve the needs of their constituents. The volume includes several appendices and a large number of tables. Appendix A, a detailed account of American Jewry's response to the Yom Kippur War, is a valuable and fascinating document. Tables within the text include a listing of the sub-ethnic origins of the first Jewish settler in each of the fifty states and the sub-ethnic character of the first synagogue in each of these states; the regional distribution of the offices of the national Jewish organizations; a listing of extra-congregational bodies in New York City between 1786 and 1860; the committee structure of the Jewish Welfare Federation of Philadelphia; and assorted tabulations of the annual receipts and allocations of the welfare federations in the early 1970's. In no other single volume can one find the sheer range and variety of information presented here.

And yet, there is something curiously unsatisfying about *Community and Polity*. For all the material Elazar has assembled and the analytical force he has marshaled to explain that material, the reader is left in the end without the understanding of "the organizational dynamics of American Jewry"

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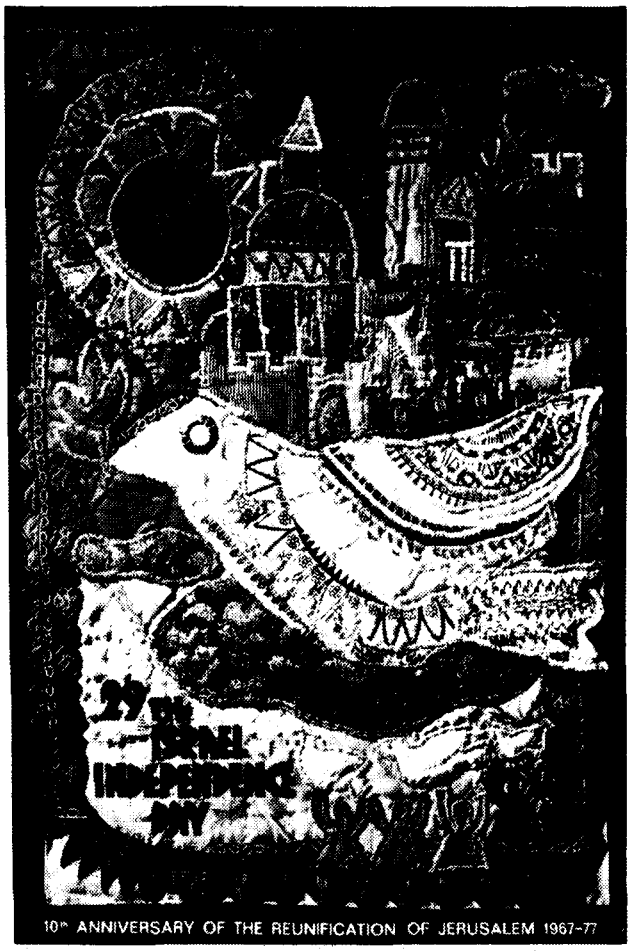

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which the subtitle promises. The problem, I would hold, is a conceptual one.

Elazar's analytic "model" draws on two related concepts, federalism and noncentralization; it is these, he believes, that help explain the "dynamics" of Jewish community organization. The trouble with both of them, however, is that they stand in contradiction to the clear trends of present-day American Jewish life, as a good deal of the evidence in Elazar's own book shows.

By federalism Elazar apparently does not mean a system with a strong central authority but rather, to quote a secondary definition of the term in the *Oxford English Dictionary,* that form of government "in which two or more states constitute a political unity while remaining more or less independent with regard to their internal affairs." This sort of federalism, Elazar contends, is an ancient concept in Jewish history, traceable to the era of the biblical Twelve Tribes. While that may or may not be so, it is hard to reconcile this notion of federalism with what Elazar himself sees as the most significant trend in Jewish community organization today: the drift away from institutional autonomy and toward communal "integration." In the end, the concept of federalism comes only to mean that a variety of "roof" organizations has been created on both the local and national level of Jewish life, with diverse purposes, structures, functions, and powers.

As with federalism, so with noncentralization, which Elazar sees as a significant component of American experience in general and the American Jewish experience in particular. "Noncentralization," he writes, "is institutionalized in American society, in government, religion, education, and most of the other arenas of American life (perhaps least in the economy), all of which serve to reinforce what is not only a basic social pattern but one that is culturally and ideologically accepted as the correct one." Elazar concludes that "this institutionalized noncentralization carries over to influence Jewish life as well. . . ."

Yet whatever lip service the American people and their political leaders pay to the autonomy of local institutions, the independence of those institutions has been severely undermined by the nationalization of virtually all facets of American life since the end of the Civil War. And as for American Jews, Elazar offers ample evidence to show that the concept of noncentralization has been rendered obsolete by the emerging corporate community—on both the local and national level. Thus, in reviewing the organizational consequences of the Yom Kippur War, Elazar writes:

> What is most noticeable is its impact on . . . the growing centralization of organized American Jewish life. . . . The thrust of the 20th century has been to integrate what was once separate. . . . Now for the first time negotiations must be conducted within established countrywide limits . . . limits based upon a written agreement negotiated by representatives of the most powerful elements in the Jewish people as a whole.

As Elazar himself implicitly admits, then, it is no longer illuminating to describe Jewish community organization in terms of either federalism or noncentralization.

Since World War II there has been a steady erosion in the differences among American Jews that are based on country of origin, ideological commitment, religious affiliation, or generational mode of life. With the decline or elimination of such differences, community organization has become the principal medium through which a collective Jewish will is expressed. For the student of American Jewish life, a strong focus on the corporate community—its methods of raising funds and allocating resources, its decision-making procedures, its sense of priorities and of where the main issues for the Jewish community lie—is very much needed. Elazar's *Community and Polity* is a start, but only a start, in the right direction.

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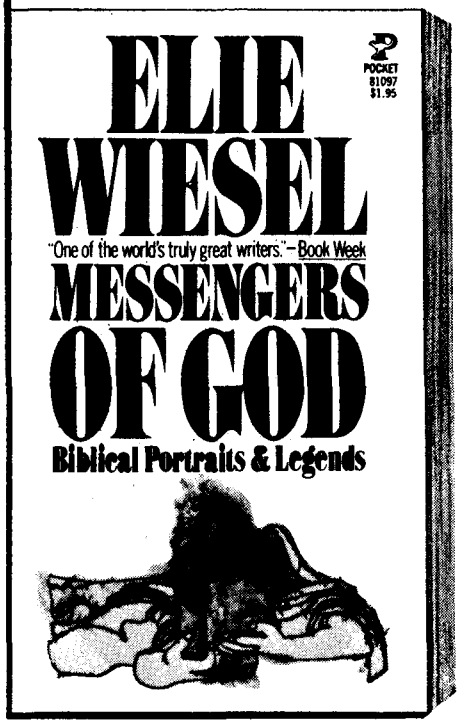

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TRADITIONS OF AMERICAN EDUCATION. By LAWRENCE A. CREMIN. *Basic Books. 172 pp. $8.95.*

Reviewed by CHESTER E. FINN, JR.

ONE might suppose the history of American education to be a quiet scholarly backwater, dominated by academics far removed from the intellectual battles that rage both in other branches of history and in contemporary studies of educational policy, and one would not be entirely wrong. Much that passes for educational history is indeed pedestrian and uninteresting. But it would be a pity to look no further, for the subject also offers a rich assortment of controversies, a fine vantage point from which to glimpse the evolution of American society and its present discontents, a raft of information about an intrinsically important set of institutions, and a handful of distinguished scholars to help guide one through its byways. Of these scholars, none is more distinguished than Lawrence A. Cremin, the president of Columbia University's Teachers College.

The only obstacle to calling Cremin the "dean" of American educational historians is that two major schools of educational history have grown up in the past fifteen years, and the dean of one would not be acceptable to the members of the other. Both began as modern reactions to earlier scholarship in the field, particularly the work of Ellwood P. Cubberly and his contemporaries, who celebrated the public school as the apotheosis of American education, indeed of the American experience, and whose writings tended both to isolate the development of formal schooling from other educational forces and to remove education from its social, political, and intellectual context.

If we now regard these early toilers as unimaginative, short-sighted, and insufficiently critical of the in-

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stitutions whose tale they told in extravagant detail, it is largely because the mainstream of educational historiography today flows from the work of Cremin and his colleagues in what might be termed the first revisionist school. The three lectures that comprise the body of *Traditions of American Education* offer a solid introduction to the ideas of these historians and to the learned catholicity of their scholarship at its best. Their accomplishment is the reconceptualization of educational history, one which regards the public school as a single thread in an intricate web of forces and institutions—formal and informal, public and private—and the story of education itself as inseparable from the larger drama of men, events, ideas, and social organizations.

Cremin chooses to define education as "the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, or sensibilities, as well as any outcomes of that effort." To him, the family, the church, the printing press, and the factory are joined in the "configuration" of "educative" forces. Not surprisingly, education emerges from his analysis as both agent and reagent, as a set of influences on other historical developments as well as one of their principal products.

Given the scope of Cremin's endeavor and the brevity of this volume, it is not surprising that his brushstrokes are broad. He devotes about forty pages to each of three large periods that collectively span the American experience from 1607 to the Bicentennial. Cremin does not shrink from sweeping conclusions, but, in the manner of Oscar Handlin, he also displays a gift for the evocative example, peppering his account with excerpts from diaries, autobiographies, and secondary works, and with enough data to sustain his judgments.

ARE there identifiable "traditions" in American education? In order fully to comprehend Cremin's response one must reckon with the second revisionist school and with the message of those scholars who would not recognize him as their dean, indeed whose work is in no small part a reaction to his own and whose assumptions and conclusions he seeks to refute in this volume. That second school consists of radical historians and social scientists like Walter Feinberg, Colin Greer, Michael Katz, Joel H. Spring, Herbert Gintis, and Samuel Bowles. Their combined *oeuvre* is characterized, in Diane Ravitch's words, by "their thorough rejection of liberal values and liberal society and their shared belief that schools were *consciously* designed as undemocratic instruments of manipulation an dsocial control."* Their marked unease with the teachings of Cremin, Bernard Bailyn, and other members of the first school is at least as much political as intellectual in its origins. Because the radicals start from the premise that American society is gravely flawed, because they disdain liberal efforts at social reform, and because they tend to view every social institution as part of a generalized conspiracy to perpetuate inequality and exploitation, it follows that they regard formal education as yet another instrument of repression, a means of keeping people ill-informed and docile, a tool for socializing the young into unrevolutionary (if highly skilled) servitude. They share the first school's insistence that education be viewed in context, but they despise the context.

Through most of *Traditions of American Education,* Cremin ignores the radical revisionists, preferring instead simply to tell the story his own way. In the final pages, however, he spells out his assumptions clearly:

> Contrary to the drift of a good deal of scholarly opinion during the past ten years, I happen to believe that on balance the American education system has

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* "The Revisionists Revised: Studies in the Historiography of American Education," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Education,* Vol. 4, 1977, pp. 1-84. See also my review of Gintis and Bowles, *Schooling in Capitalist America,* COMMENTARY, June 1976.

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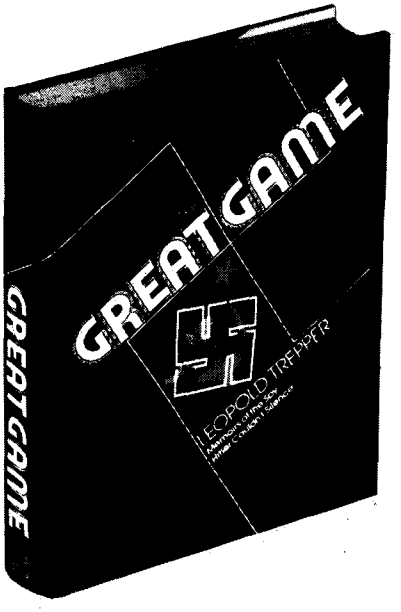
contributed significantly to the advancement of liberty, equality, and fraternity, in that complementarity and tension that mark the relations among them in a free society.

Fully aware that the evidence is mixed, and conscious that educational institutions, being human, "have been guilty of their full share of evil, venality, and failure," he nonetheless judges that

> the aspirations of American education have been more noble than base, and that its performance over the past two centuries has been more liberating of a greater diversity of human energies and potentialities than has been the case in most other eras and in most other places.

One is not surprised to discover that a man who has found education to be a flexible, responsive, and generally positive force in American life for nearly four centuries holds to an optimistic view of its potential for the future. Unlike many others who have spent their careers in institutions devoted to the training of schoolteachers and administrators, however, Cremin does not dwell on the promise of the public schools. Although he continues to feel that the school-based compensatory programs of the 1960's "demonstrated that a massive increment in public funds could provide more knowledge, more committed personnel, and more resources in sufficient quantities to begin to make a discernible difference in the direction of progressive aspirations," and although he is still bitter that "the effort was halted too soon and for all the wrong reasons," he locates the frontier of educational policy not in the traditional classroom but rather in our handling of early childhood education, in the broadcast media, in the experience of work, and in the uses of leisure time. That is not an especially original insight; many educational policy-makers and analysts have been saying much the same thing for years. What is special about Cremin is that it flows so naturally from his magisterial account of education's enduring capacity for social adaptation.



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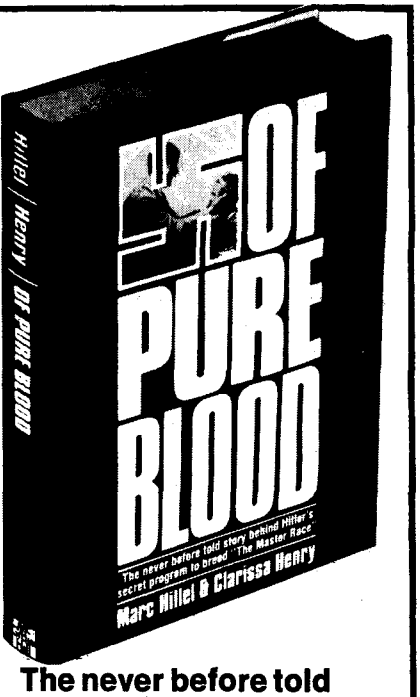
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Shul-going

SYNAGOGUE LIFE. By SAMUEL HEILMAN. *University of Chicago Press. 306 pp. $12.95.*

Reviewed by DAVID SINGER

THERE is a nice irony in the fact that Samuel Heilman's *Synagogue Life* appears under the auspices of the University of Chicago Press, for it was that publishing house which in 1928 issued Louis Wirth's sociological classic, *The Ghetto,* a book which argued in no uncertain terms that Judaism and the Jewish community were anachronisms slated for inevitable extinction. Now, a half-century later, a young, American-born, Orthodox Jew, with a freshly-minted Ph.D. in sociology, has written an elaborate study of a vibrant Orthodox synagogue—a synagogue which is itself a symbol of the revival of Orthodox Judaism in America and of its adaptation to modern middle-class life.

The approach this book takes to its subject is itself interesting, and is in its own way a signal of Orthodoxy's coming-of-age in America. For in presenting his portrait of an Orthodox *shul* ("Kehillat Kodesh," in metropolitan "Sprawl City"), Heilman makes use of "interactional analysis," an up-to-date sociological technique developed by Erving Goffman that involves, to resort to the jargon of the trade, the "microscopic and macrocosmic examination of human sociation." *Synagogue Life* is concerned, that is to say, not with the life of the spirit but with how "Orthodox Jews, as social beings, act in their congregation[s]":

> This is not a book about the religion of Orthodox Jews, for it explains neither their religion nor the essence of their Orthodoxy. . . . One will not find the faithful Jew here—not because he does not exist, but because the analytic perspective used here transforms him into a person like all others, subject primarily to the imperatives of commingling.

For Heilman, it is the "interaction generated within and by the members of a . . . synagogue" that constitutes the functional definition of *shul*-going.

An Orthodox synagogue is a house of prayer, study, and assembly, and Heilman takes pains to delineate everything, or almost everything, that pertains to the "interactional process" in each of these three contexts. Thus, the reader of *Synagogue Life* will find detailed discussions of the social significance of *yarmulkes* of every type (knitted, white linen, black, plaid, velvet); the varieties of gossip (news, public knowledge, privileged information, secret gossip); the assorted forms of *shul* humor (public joking, privileged joking, secret joking); and various kinds of religious study (weekly study groups, Sabbath afternoon lectures, pre-Passover and pre-Yom Kippur lectures, individual study). If you are interested in the types of mendicants who visit Orthodox synagogues, Heilman can tell you everything there is to know about beggars, *schnorrers,* and *meshulachim.* If you want to understand the morphology of *shokeling* (the swaying that accompanies prayer), the author is fully up on the subject, and will supply you with distinctions upon distinctions. If you ever wondered about the mysteries of "Yenglish," the Yiddishized English that is spoken in *shul*—e.g., when a professor (of English!) queries, "How *medakdek* [careful] do you have to be in learning out this *pasuk* [verse]?"—Heilman is ready to offer intelligent guidance. All in all, *Synagogue Life* is a Baedeker to almost every aspect of the Orthodox synagogue.

Amid the welter of details, two central points clearly emerge. The first is that the members of "Kehillat Kodesh," as modern, Orthodox Jews, are engaged in a continuous process of self-definition. Being committed to *both* Jewish tradition and the modern world, they seek to reconcile the two, and to situate themselves in relation to other Jews who do not. Thus, it is the members' persistent habit to make disparaging remarks about the religiosity manifested in other "Sprawl City" Jewish institutions. Conservative and Reform syna-

DAVID SINGER *writes regularly on Jewish affairs in* COMMENTARY, Midstream, Judaism, *and elsewhere.*

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gogues are "too modern"; the people who frequent them are labeled *"trefniaks"* (not kosher) and *"goyim"* (Gentiles). On the other hand, the traditionalist "Sprawl City" yeshivah high school is criticized for being "too *frum*" (religious); its teachers and students are "way out" and "crazy *frum*." All this bad-mouthing has a very definite purpose—to establish the "fact," as Heilman puts it, that true *"frumkeit* (religiosity) is synonymous with conformity to Jewish observance as publicly practiced at 'Kehillat Kodesh.' Any other form is deviant."

If the members of "Kehillat Kodesh" do not hesitate to put other Jews in their place, they are also quite prepared to bring strong conformist pressures to bear within the congregation itself. The main instrument for doing so is the *kibbud,* which refers to a "public honor associated with the ceremonial performance of a ritual act." There are all kinds of *kibbudim*—opening the ark, lifting the Torah, leading the congregation in prayer, etc.—and each carries a particular degree of prestige that also varies according to the occasion (weekday, Sabbath, holiday, etc.). Since everybody at "Kehillat Kodesh" is fully aware of the hierarchy of honors involved, the *kibbudim* function as coin-of-the-realm in the synagogue's spiritual/social economy:

> At times *kibbudim* reflect changes in relations brought about by a change in status. . . . At other times, *kibbudim* affirm constancy as well. . . . To fail to receive any is to have it publicly proclaimed . . . that one lacks any links of obligation with the collectivity and so has failed to share in its symbolic wealth—its honor—and hence that one is implicitly rejected.

Thus, any "Kehillat Kodesh" member who does not live up to the *shul*'s standards of Orthodoxy, or who fails to involve himself sufficiently in the synagogue's ongoing activities, runs a serious risk of being painfully rebuffed.

WHILE Heilman appears to scan the Orthodox synagogue with an all-seeing eye, his vision in fact fails him in two areas. Amazingly enough, he has chosen, out of sheer convenience, to study a *shul* that happens not to have an appointed rabbi. Yet, as even the most inexperienced *shul*-goer is aware, the rabbi is the pivotal figure in the life of an Orthodox synagogue. To compensate for the lack, Heilman offers a brief general discussion of rabbinic authority, but this, though suggestive, lacks the specificity that is the hallmark of *Synagogue Life* as a whole.

If Heilman has precious little to say about the role of the rabbi, he dwells at great length on the function of gossip in the synagogue. Yet here too his analysis lacks thoroughness—in this case on account of the limitations of his method. Having committed himself to the use of interactional analysis, Heilman steadfastly re-

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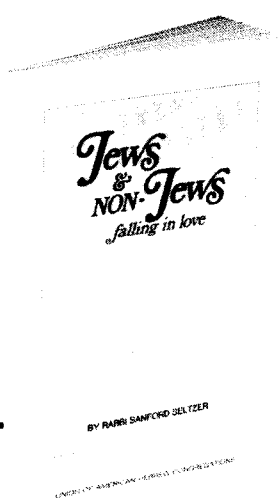

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fuses to move beyond the perspective it provides. As a consequence, *Synagogue Life* is happily free of cheap psychologizing, but it is also completely uncritical. For Heilman, the incessant gossiping at "Kehillat Kodesh" represents something positive: it provides a harmless way of sublimating aggressive feelings, and it allows for the "latent reaffirmation of community sentiments, beliefs, and values." But, certainly, this is not the whole story. What about the insidious *lashon hara* (literally "evil tongue," i.e., slanderous gossip) that eats away at the social fabric of so many synagogues? What about the fact that Orthodox Jews gossip with relish *everywhere* —at work, at home, at play, as well as in *shul*? Why is it that people who otherwise are so scrupulous about matters of religious observance, blithely ignore the major prohibition against gossiping? *Shul* gossip is but one facet of a much broader phenomenon, a phenomenon that is sinister in nature rather than benign and that is rooted in something quite other than the "imperatives of commingling." (In fact, the saintly Hafetz Hayyim—Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan—considered *lashon hara* to be the occupational disease of the Orthodox Jew.) About all this, Heilman is silent.

There are other problems as well that arise in connection with Heilman's use of interactional analysis. *Synagogue Life* is very much like a king-sized mirror: it blows up everything that it reflects. For the Orthodox insider, who is already familiar with the setting Heilman describes, this may well make for entertaining and enlightening reading. The average reader, however, is likely to lose his way amid all the detail; enmeshed in a mass of particulars, he will not emerge with a clear picture of the whole. The very comprehensiveness of this method is a stumbling block to clear understanding—a classic instance of more adding up to less.

If in one sense *Synagogue Life* is a king-sized mirror, in another sense it is a fun-house mirror, not so much reflecting as distorting reality. Heilman is aware that he is dealing with but one aspect of *shul*-going, yet the question remains: just how important *is* this aspect in the totality of what goes on in an Orthodox synagogue? Is it really possible to study the "imperatives of commingling" in isolation from the religious laws which govern synagogue behavior, and the life of faith which brings people to *shul* in the first place? These basic questions are not even addressed in *Synagogue Life*. Given Orthodoxy's surprising revival on the American scene, it is a little strange to find matters of law and faith sidestepped as they are here. Are not law and faith what Orthodox life (both in the synagogue and out) is presumably about?

The Managerial Elite

THE GAMESMAN. By MICHAEL MACCOBY. *Simon & Schuster. 285 pp. $7.95.*

Reviewed by STANLEY ROTHMAN

MICHAEL MACCOBY is a disciple of Erich Fromm, and in this book he applies Fromm's hypotheses about the nature of modern life to an analysis of one segment of the American managerial elite. To Fromm, contemporary capitalist society is bad for the health; it produces human beings who fail to achieve their full, productive, "loving" potential and are alienated from themselves. Capitalism in Fromm's view has created a number of character types, among them the "marketing" or "cybernetic" type, a completely lifeless "nonperson" who is making the world a "sum of lifeless artifacts." Maccoby's book is at least partly designed to provide empirical evidence for the existence of such character types.

Maccoby and his staff spent a good deal of time and money interviewing a group of managers drawn from dynamic, high-technology companies, administering and interpreting complete sets of Rorschachs and a detailed, "objective" questionnaire. His book displays

STANLEY ROTHMAN, *professor of government at Smith College, is currently completing a study of American and German youth.*

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all the trappings of contemporary social-science research. We do not, however, find in it Fromm's exact character types. Maccoby's portrait of the businessman is softer than Fromm's. These managers, he was surprised to discover, are fairly "liberal" on many social issues, and many seem to him better integrated and more sensitive than some of his academic colleagues. Nevertheless, even the healthiest of them—so says Maccoby—is "alienated," unable to realize his full potential and incapable of developing genuine, "socially-oriented," "loving" relations. This alienation, in Maccoby's view as in Fromm's, is produced by capitalism and cannot be ended unless the "system" is fundamentally changed.

As Maccoby outlines his argument, the character types produced by capitalism have changed as American business itself has changed over the years. The first in order of time is the "craftsman" of the 18th and 19th centuries, the traditional builder, farmer, or artisan. This person's sense of self-worth derives from knowledge, skill, discipline, and self-reliance. His aim is to create something by mastering his material. Maccoby clearly likes this type, but feels he is a dying breed. Besides, while some craftsmen are genuinely democratic and "life-loving," even the most mature of them have not developed a deep understanding of themselves or others.

The "jungle fighter," Maccoby's next type, is rather more unpleasant. These are the robber barons of post-Civil War America, driven by a lust for power. The jungle fighter's pleasure lies in crushing his opponents. He wishes to be the only one at the top, and what he fears most is annihilation. Few of this increasingly outmoded type remain in the business world. Their counterparts in politics are Nixon, Johnson, and their ilk.

The third character type is the "company man." Here, Maccoby is indebted to William Whyte's 1950's portrait of the "organization man." This person is generally found in the middle-management ranks of the companies in Maccoby's study. He is a bureaucrat whose only desire is a secure position in the firm. His worst fear is failure, and his fondest wish is for the approval of his superiors. He is a "hollow" man, without real goals of his own. His political counterpart is Ford or Eisenhower.

And finally we have the man of today and tomorrow, the "gamesman." He is found among the managerial elite and is represented in public life by Kennedy or Kissinger. For this type, business (or politics) is a game. The emphasis is not on goals or social responsibility but on the joy of playing, winning, and constantly finding new options. The hero (or anti-hero) of *The Sting*, as played by Robert Redford, is the prototypical gamesman.

Gamesmen are not without virtues. They work well with people, they are not authoritarian, and in a sense they are "socially concerned." But they lack a capacity for full development, and their lives remain one-dimensional:

> The fatal danger for gamesmen is to be trapped in perpetual adolescence, never outgrowing the self-centered compulsion to score, never confronting their deep, deep boredom with life when it is not a game, never developing a sense of meaning that requires more of them and allows others to trust them.
>
> An old and tiring gamesman is a pathetic figure, especially after he has lost a few contests, and with them his confidence. . . . His attitude has kept him from deep friendship and intimacy.

WHAT are we to make of this analysis? Once the social-science packaging is stripped away, is there anything in *The Gamesman* that lends it more credibility than Erich Fromm's original formulations about modern man? Maccoby asserts that he administered a questionnaire containing 229 items to 250 people, yet he offers no systematic analysis of the results to dem-

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onstrate that his types do in fact exist, or that one can differentiate among them. Indeed, in the one instance where he does provide a table with some summary data, it is so sloppily presented as to be almost meaningless. His data supposedly show that about half of the managers questioned checked "anxiety" and "restlessness" as personal difficulties, but we have no way of knowing from his presentation whether they indicated that these were minor difficulties or major ones; clearly, in a questionnaire of this type, even reasonably healthy people would check anxiety as a minor difficulty.

In interpreting the Rorschach protocols, Maccoby decided to use a thematic analysis rather than to rely upon formal scores. This is legitimate, but it opens the way to considerable subjectivity. There is no evidence that the author made any attempt to have his analysis of the responses checked by someone who was not familiar with his hypotheses or the persons being studied—standard procedure in any study which relies on thematic interpretations.

Finally, only five of the 250 people interviewed are reported on. There is no way of ascertaining how many of Maccoby's respondents really fit into which type, and we have only Maccoby's word that these five are anything but isolated individuals resembling no one but themselves.

Maccoby's extrapolations from his data are even flimsier than his analysis. He offers absolutely no substantiation for his contention that Kennedy and Kissinger were or are gamesmen (aside from a single quotation from Kissinger). Are we to believe that Kennedy displayed less commitment of the heart than Truman or FDR or Teddy Roosevelt? Why should we take Maccoby's analysis more seriously than that of James David Barber, who, in *The Presidential Character,* and with rather more evidence, calls Kennedy an "active-positive" President, i.e., a genuinely productive person with a deep commitment to moral issues?

In the end, Maccoby's typology is designed to serve a political-ideological position. Like Fromm, Maccoby *assumes* that a society of fully "loving" and "caring" people will spring into being once we change our present system of economic organization. His evaluation of his respondents is based on this vision. The fact that it is a vision widely shared in the culture of today, amounting in effect to a conventional wisdom, may account for the generally favorable reception this book has received, but it does not make Maccoby's presumptuous analysis correct or his interpretation of reality a true one.

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